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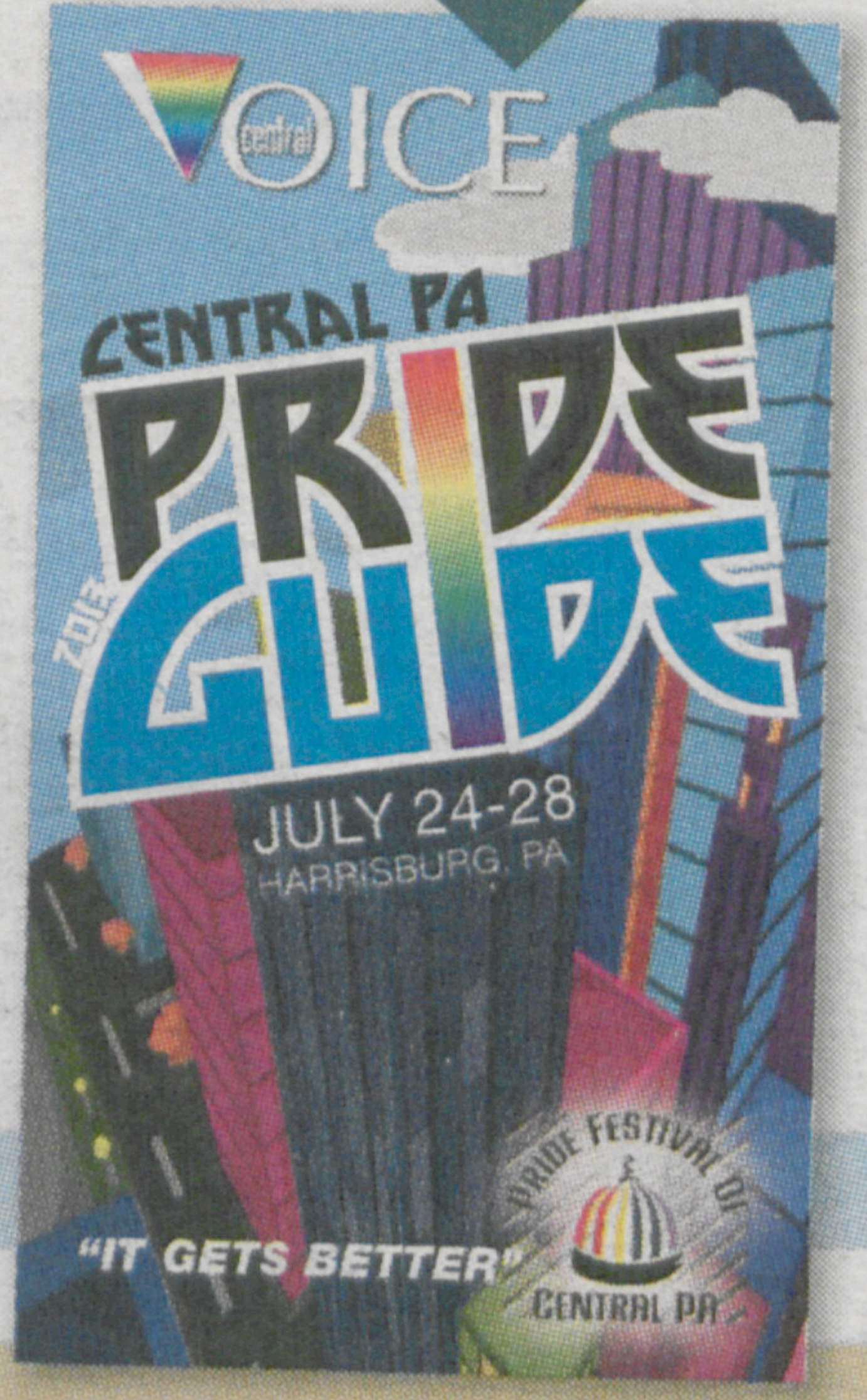
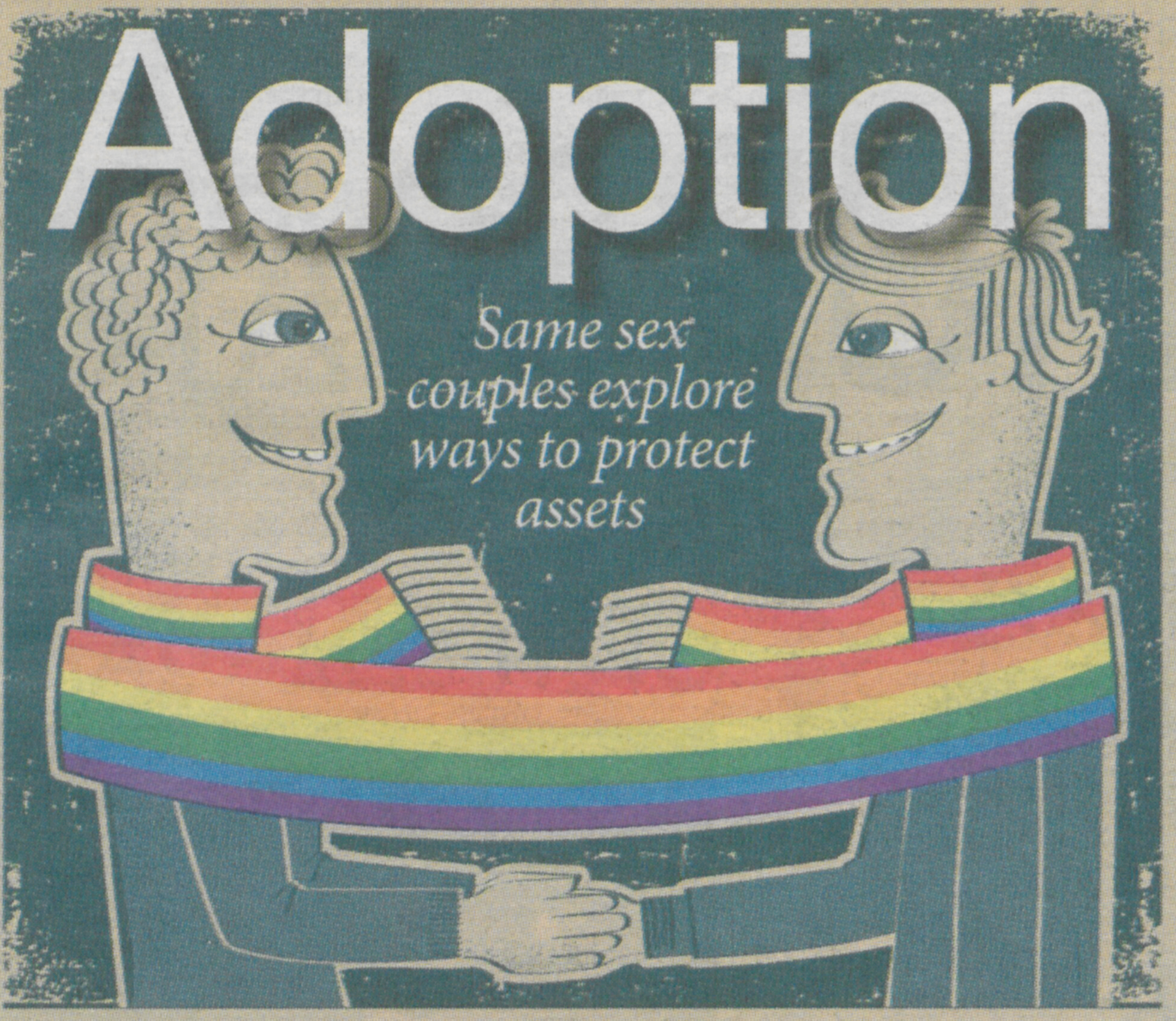


Adoption OPTION



Same sex couples explore ways to protect assets

By Frank Pizzoli

Together 44 years, John, 65, and Gregory, 73, are now father and son, so to speak.

Unable to get married in Pennsylvania, the long-time couple has circumvented the state's prohibition against same-sex unions.

"We adopted one another!" John said, with the smile of a Cheshire cat on his face. In the process, the couple added a layer of protection to their relationship while the state continues to deny recognition of their same-sex relationship.

"We wanted to protect ourselves from higher inheritance taxes that heterosexual couples do not incur upon the death of one or other spouse," John explained.

Pennsylvania defines marriage as between "one man and one woman," a measure signed into law in 1996 by then-Governor Tom Ridge, who now supports same-sex marriage. With the US Supreme Court at press time deciding the fate of California's Proposition 8, Ridge signed an amicus curiae brief asking the court to strike down that state's voter-passed referendum overturning the state's law legalizing gay marriage.

Without legal recognition of their relationship, same-sex couples like John and Gregory face punishing sets of rules regarding state and federal estate laws, inheritance laws, joint state and federal tax filing issues, lopsided health insurance tax rules, and difficulties around social security benefits.

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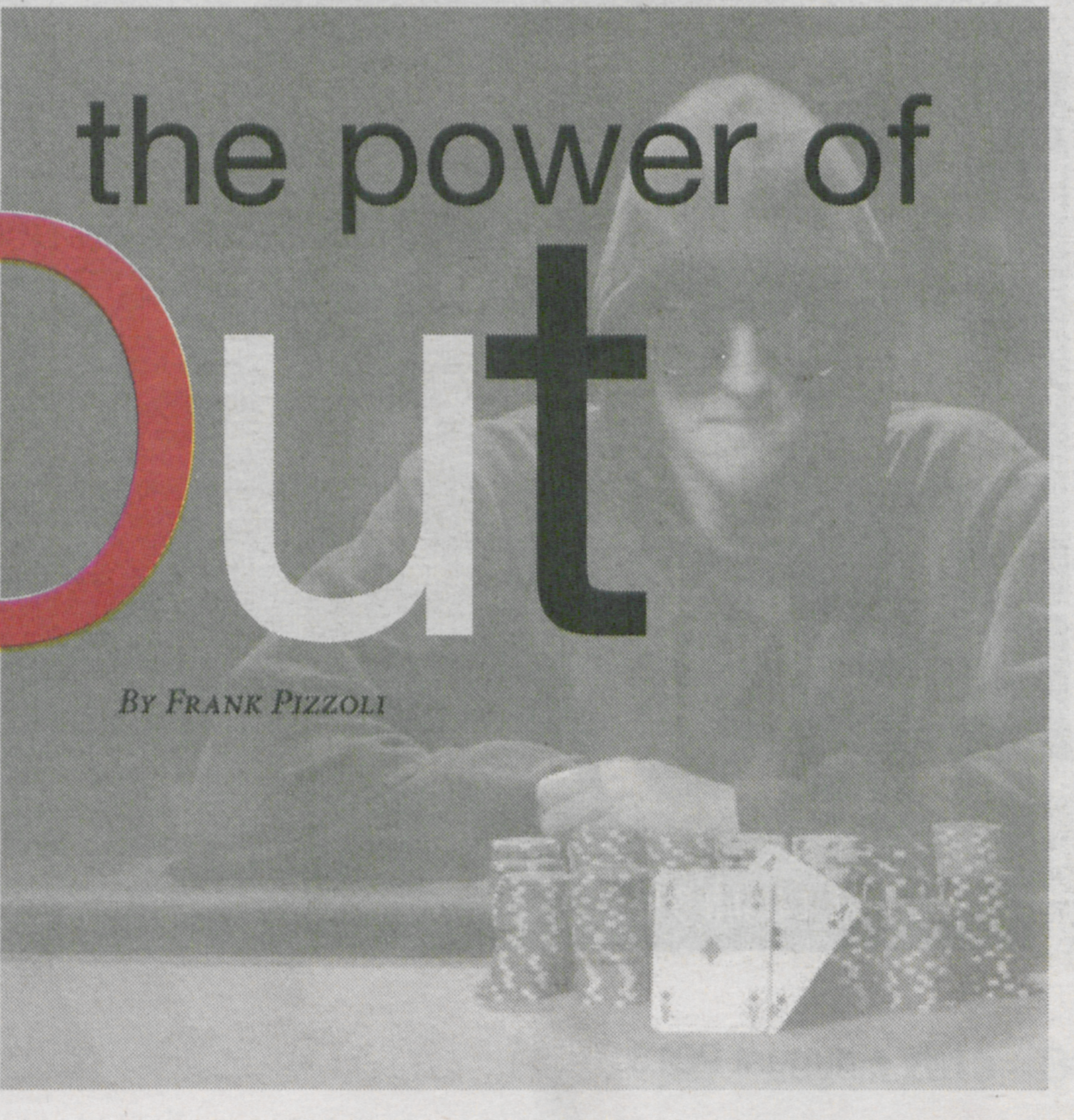
Professional Poker Player:
Jason Somerville

the power of Out



By Frank Pizzoli

"I met him on a Friday in December of 2011, he had an event Saturday so I didn't see him again until Sunday, but then I saw him every day thereafter," 26-year-old Jason "JCarver" Somerville, told Central Voice. He is referring to his partner Vincent, 24, with whom Somerville says he fell in love with "at an insane speed".

Somerville is world's first openly gay male professional poker player.

Not gambling on his relationship, Somerville explained that when he came out in a now-famous blog posted on Valentine's Day 2012 he wanted to "be respectful of our relationship".

The response overwhelmed Somerville.

"Everyone was so kind. I received about 1,000 messages within the first 48 hours. It was, without any doubt, the best days of my life," Somerville says.

Having discovered the power of "out," Somerville a year later

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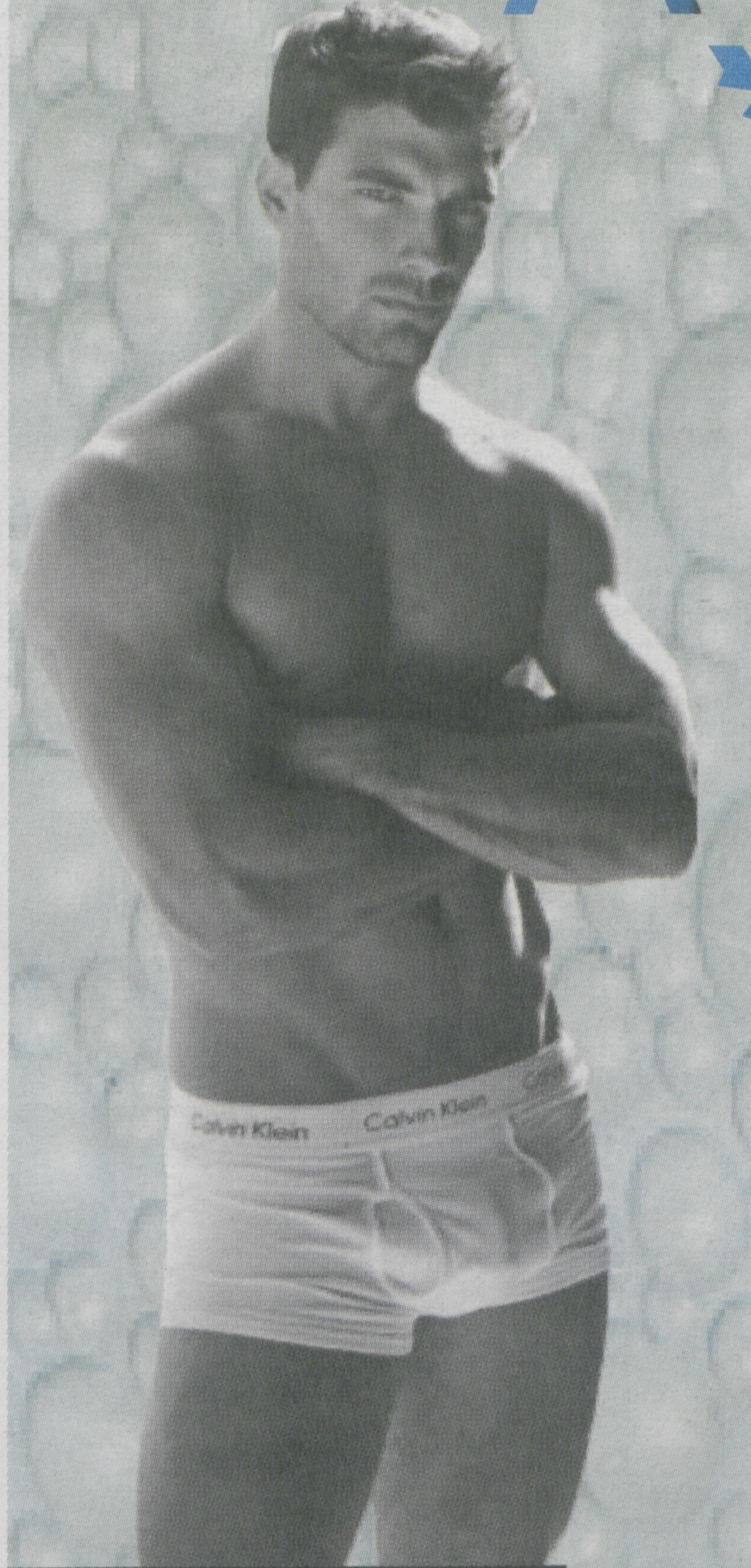
Improving Womens' Health pg 28

Gorgeous
And
Young

THURSDAYS



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Political Update

Local Rep. Kim Makes Expenses Available

In an effort to improve transparency and openness in state government, state Rep. Patty Kim, D-Dauphin, announced that she will provide her expense reports on her legislative website.

"As an elected state representative I am accountable to the people of my district," Kim said. "I hope that by posting my expenses, they will see that my staff and I are doing all we can to be good stewards of taxpayer money."

The monthly expense reports are available on Kim's website at www.pahouse.com/kim under the Expense Reports tab on the left side of the page. In addition to listing all of her expenses, Kim does not accept any per diems or a lease for a state-funded automobile.

"As families are forced to cut from their personal budgets during tough times, I believe legislators should do the same with the state budget," Kim said. "These are some ways that I can help save taxpayer money."

By the Numbers

A May 2013 Franklin & Marshall College poll says:
Marriage - 54% favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally
Guns - 89% support background checks for all gun sales
Liquor - 47% favor privatizing of state liquor stores, down from 53%

Floods, Famine, Now Economic Depression

A Harvard professor who a decade ago was listed among Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in the world has suggested that gay people are inherently selfish because they do not have children and therefore don't care about future generations. Asleep at the research wheel?

Niall Ferguson blamed the 2008 worldwide financial meltdown on Keynesian economics and told a group of investors that John Maynard Keynes' economic theories are flawed because he was gay.

"Speaking at the Tenth Annual Altegris Conference in Carlsbad, Calif., in front of a group of more than 500 financial advisors and investors, Ferguson responded to a question about Keynes' famous philosophy of self-interest versus the economic philosophy of Edmund Burke, who believed there was a social contract among the living, as well as the dead," reported Tom Kostigen at Financial Advisor magazine: Ferguson asked the audience how many children Keynes had. He explained that Keynes had none because he was a homosexual and was married to a ballerina, with whom he likely talked of "poetry" rather than procreated. The audience went quiet at the remark. Some attendees later said they found the remarks offensive.

Same-sex Marriage Benefits Unconstitutional

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has issued an opinion stating that local governments and school districts that offer marriage benefits to same-sex partners are violating the state constitution.

Tea party-backed state Sen. Dan Patrick sought the ruling in November. The Houston Republican argued that Texas amended its constitution in 2005 to define marriage as between one man and one woman, while prohibiting government entities from recognizing anything similar to marriage.

The cities of El Paso, Austin and Fort Worth have offered some benefits to domestic partners. Pflugerville, outside Austin, became the state's first school district to extend similar benefits. Patrick said in a statement that Monday's opinion ensures local communities and school districts "cannot subvert the will of Texans." A spokeswoman for Pflugerville Independent School had no comment.

Gay Men Are Dying:

Meningitis Vaccine Available Locally

Visited NYC lately? Many of us have. The New York Department of Health is recommending that all gay/bi men who have visited NYC in recent months get vaccinated for Meningitis.

Seven men have died (four in the past six months) and 22 more have become infected since 2010 with a drug resistant strain of Meningococcal. The disease is spread through close contact so it could be as simple as having a good time on a packed dance floor and has nothing to do with sex.

There is a vaccine! Symptoms can often be overlooked but can intensify quickly. A gay man in West Hollywood felt sick on Monday, was in a coma by Wednesday and was brain dead by Friday. Don't Delay, Get Vaccinated!

Call Alder Health Services (800.867.1550) or your medical provider.

NOM Cautioned Supporters Go Too Far

The following comment was left on a recent post of the National Organization for Marriage's blog by a longtime NOM blog commentator and supporter Barb Chamberlan (comment 10): It's always fascinating to Google the names of children in the grips of same-sex couples. You'll be surprised at how much information there is about them, despite their guardians' attempts to keep it a secret. You might even find the names of their real parents. Try it sometime. Of course, the opposition is too afraid to do so.

BBC Reports Growing Attacks

A quarter of gay people surveyed in a major EU poll say they have been subjected to attacks or violent threats in the past five years. Poorer and younger respondents were more likely to face discrimination due to their sexuality, the survey found. The EU's Fundamental Rights Agency surveyed 93,000 people in the EU and Croatia for what it calls the most comprehensive survey of its kind.

The EU LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) Survey shows some worrying trends, says the BBC's Anna Holligan in The Hague, where some 300 politicians and experts are gathering to discuss shaping new European Union policies to stamp out homophobia.

The survey found:

- Some 26% of respondents (and 35% of transgender respondents) said they had been attacked or threatened with violence in the past five years
- Most of the hate attacks reported took place in public and were perpetrated by more than one person, with the attackers predominantly being male
- More than half of those who said they had been attacked did not report the incident to the authorities, believing no action would be taken
- Half of respondents said they had felt personally discriminated against in the year before the survey, although 90% did not report the discrimination
- Some 20% of gay or bisexual respondents and 29% of transgender respondents said they had suffered discrimination at work or when looking for a job
- Two-thirds of respondents said they had tried to hide or disguise their sexuality at school.

20 Arrested at Moscow Pride Parade

Around 20 LGBT activists participating in the Moscow Pride Parade were arrested as they attempted to march from the Russian Federation State Duma (Parliament) building to City Hall. Nikolai Alekseev was among those arrested. Police grabbed him outside City Hall minutes after his arrival from his safe house. As he was being taken away by police, an anti-gay protestor attacked Alekseev, an attack witness later said was ignored by police.

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Publisher & Editor
Frank Pizzoli
PosOps@aol.com

Brad Gebhart, Cartoonist

Contributing Writers
Leo Dunn
Steve Dorko
Bill Krenz
Louie Marvin
Lewis Maurer
Debra Miller
Rev. Lori Rivera
Jeanine Ruhsam
Trum Simmons

Sales Manager
Dave Brown
davebrown@pressandjournal.com

Advertising Representative
Steve Kozokas
stevek@pressandjournal.com

National Advertising:
RIVENDELL MEDIA
212-242-6863

PUBLISHED BY
Press And Journal, Inc.
20 South Union Street
Middletown, PA 17057
Subscriptions/Distribution 717-944-4628
www.pandjinc.com
info@pressandjournal.com

MEMBER:
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publisher's note

State of "The Gay" in 2013

Frank Pizzoli

MEMEOGRAPHS
OUR
LOVE
WILL
DEFEAT
YOUR
HATE
EVENTUALLY.

Still, Another Hate Crime

Friday, May 24, a group of 9-10 men attacked Eugene and yelled "faggot" as he was punched in the jaw. There have been a half-dozen, violent anti-gay hate crimes in New York City in May 2013, including the cold-blooded murder of Mark Carson, 32, for being a "faggot."

Slurs, Violence

Anti-gay slurs more than double on Twitter in past year. Alexander Nazaryan notes on Vocativ that according to numbers gathered by NoHomoPhobes.com, use of the inflammatory word faggot has risen dramatically over the past year, up from approximately 22,000 daily mentions to around 58,000, an increase of about 164 percent. (Small beans compared to the amount of tweets that go out world-wide, perhaps—but not without consequence.)

The term dyke has steadied at about 3,500 mentions each day.

The phrase no homo, on the other hand, has mostly flatlined around 11,000 daily occurrences—except for when professional athletes chime in with casually homophobic social commentary and major news-gathering sites quote them, like in the case of June 4, when mentions of the phrase spiked to about 62,000.

A lot of Tweets came out of NYC, where a recent spate of anti-gay violence claimed the life of Mark Carson, a 32-year-old man shot dead in an alleged hate crime just steps from where the historic Stonewall Riots took place in Greenwich Village, igniting the gay-rights movement. Other attacks have been just as troubling, if not fatal.

Eugene Lovendusky, a member of the LGBT direct action group Queer Rising, reportedly was himself the victim of a violent anti-gay attack May 24 in New York City's Hell's Kitchen. "Last night, Friday, May 24th, a group of 9-10 men attacked one of my dearest friends, Eugene Lovendusky," Alan Bounville wrote online "They yelled 'faggot' at Eugene as he was punched in the jaw."

Lovendusky spoke at a vigil mourning the shooting death of Mark Carson, just one before the attack. He was the organizer for the Queer Rising rally on May 16, in front of NYC's Madison Square Garden, just two days before Carson's murder. His attack makes the ninth violent anti-LGBT attack this month in New York City, and the 27th this year.

Transgender Employee Badly Beaten, 'Left For Dead'

A transgender employee of Beso, Eva Longoria's Hollywood eatery, was savagely leaving work. His family is calling the attack a hate crime. Victor Diego, 22, was leaving his job as a barista when his sisters say he was attacked on Hollywood Boulevard near the Metro station, CBS News reported.

His sisters think Diego, who is gay and transgender, was targeted because he was dressed in drag. "Sometimes men try to talk to him and they get humiliated in front of their friends when they realize it's a man," Virginia Diego told CBS. "Because he looks really good, he looks like a woman, you couldn't tell the difference," she said.

The victim's sister said he was jumped by a group of men who left him with two fractured ribs, a shattered cheekbone and a broken jaw. "He was basically left for dead just because of who he is," Virginia told CBS. "His temple was kicked in, so now they have to operate on the side of his head."

Castro Gay Man Dies after Senseless Beating

From the SF Bay Times post: What a tragedy, and right in our own Castro. As a community, we need to work together to help put an end to the rising crime and violence.

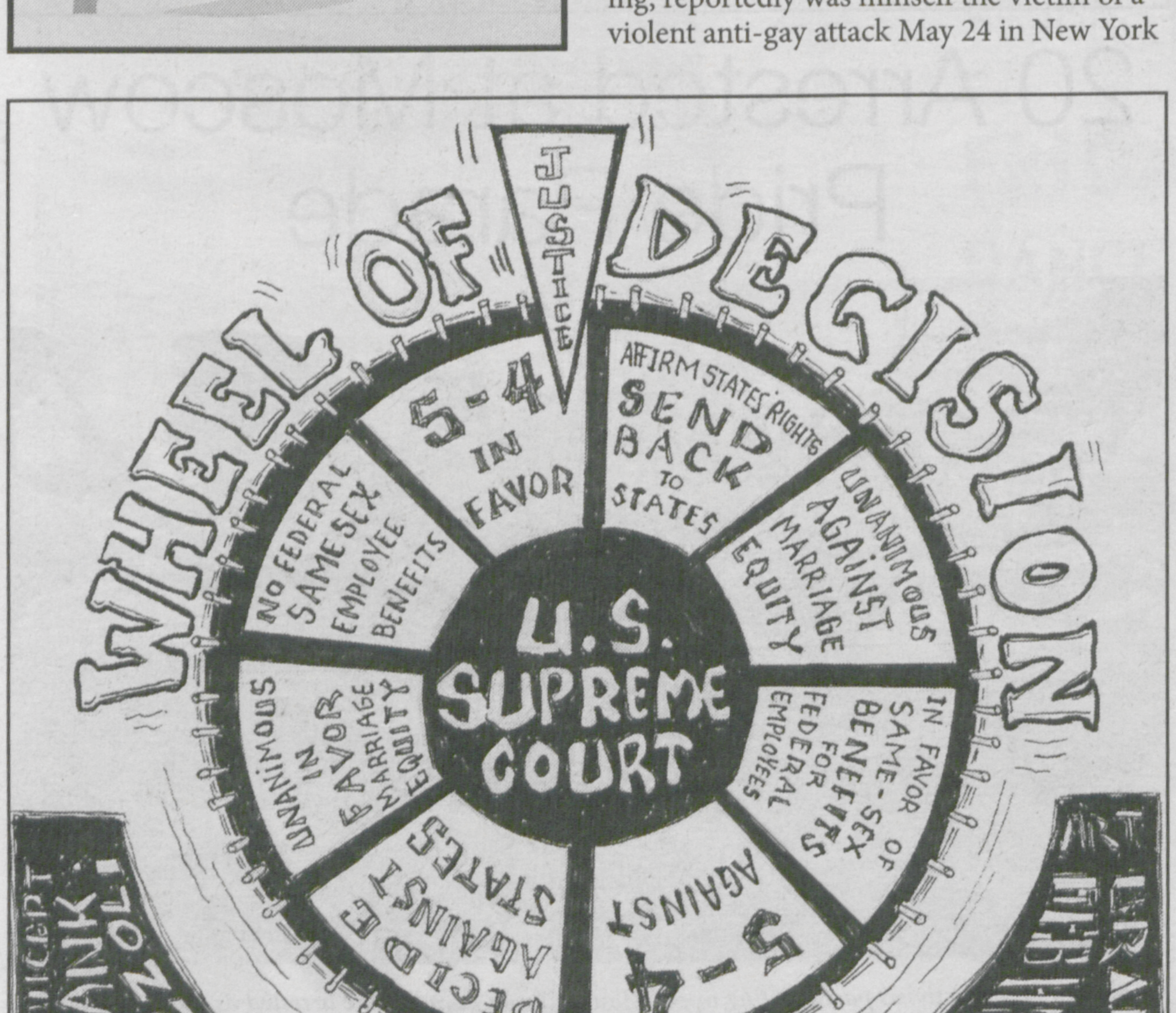
From Steve Freitag:

"Our friend Jim Cunningham passed away this morning, after being beaten senseless in the Castro last week while out walking his dog and never regaining consciousness. We'll remember Jim as a sweet, smart and funny guy who loved country music, the Monkees and Prince. One of our fondest memories of him is when we vacationed together in Las Vegas with our friend Gregg, and had one of the best meals of our life at a very fancy steakhouse in the MGM Grand. Rest in peace, Jim."

From media meister Jonathan Alter's new book:

"Murdoch installed Ailes in the corner office on Fox's second floor at 1211 Avenue of the Americas in Manhattan. The location made Ailes queasy: It was close to the street, and he lived in fear that gay activists would try to attack him in retaliation over his hostility to gay rights. (In 1989, Ailes had broken up a protest of a Rudy Giuliani speech by gay activists, grabbing demonstrator by the throat and shoving him out the door.) Barricading himself behind a massive mahogany desk, Ailes insisted on having "bombproof glass" installed in the windows – even going so far as to personally inspect samples of high-tech plexiglass, as though he were picking out new carpet. Looking down on the street below, he expressed his fears to Cooper, the editor he had tasked with up-armoring his office. "They'll be down there protesting," Ailes said. "Those gays."

Yeah, those gays.


WHEEL OF DECISION
JUSTICE
5-4 IN FAVOR
AFFIRM STATES' RIGHTS SEND BACK TO STATES
UNANIMOUS AGAINST MARRIAGE EQUITY
IN FAVOR OF SAME-SEX BENEFITS FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
5-4 AGAINST
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for blood doner equality

By Alan Kennedy-Shaffer, Founder, Harrisburg Hope

Harrisburg HOPE

> **"I would love to donate blood but due to the archaic policies of the Red Cross, as a gay male they will not allow me to do so."**
>
> *Steve Dorko, chair of the Capital Region Stonewall Democrats*

◆ ◆ ◆

> **America stands increasingly alone in perpetuating the stereotype that AIDS is a "gay disease."**

Alan Kennedy-Shaffer
Central Voice photo

When grassroots community group Harrisburg Hope partnered with the American Red Cross to host a blood drive in mid-April to honor the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing, I learned that not all blood donors are treated equally. In response to the AIDS crisis in the early 1980's, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned any man who has had sex with another man since 1977 from giving blood. In other words, gay men are summarily turned away.

"I would love to donate blood but due to the archaic policies of the Red Cross, as a gay male they will not allow me to do so," said Steve Dorko, chair of the Capital Region Stonewall Democrats. Dorko said that he is healthy but was turned away. The Red Cross responded, "The American Red Cross blood services are regulated by the FDA. Therefore, we must comply with FDA regulations regarding eligibility of blood donations. This concern has been brought to our attention in the past and it is something the American Red Cross would like to see addressed."

For the LGBT community, the gains that have been made toward full equality have been hard fought: marriage equality in a dozen states, equal benefits for federal employees in same-sex relationships, an end to the destructive "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, not using federal resources to defend bigotry in court. And so I am somewhat incredulous that the FDA has lagged behind, even after voting in 1997 to reconsider its discriminatory blood donation policy.

Why does the FDA continue to summarily turn away gay men and other men who have had sex with men more than a decade after voting to reconsider the ban and three decades after imposing the policy in response to fears about HIV transmission? With President Barack Obama on record in support of marriage equality and opposed to other forms of discrimination, I would hope that his appointees, namely Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, will change the policy and allow more people to give blood.

After all, in 2006, the American Red Cross and other groups that regularly take and test blood for HIV/AIDS and a host of other infections, viruses, and diseases, asked the FDA to overturn the policy. In 2010 and 2012, dozens of senators, including Secretary of State John Kerry, asked Commissioner Hamburg to lift the lifetime ban on men who have had sex with men. Shockingly, the FDA shifted the burden to the LGBT and scientific communities to prove that the blood of gay men is now safe, rather than on the FDA to prove that allowing gay men to donate is unsafe.

The FDA website states that "FDA would change this policy only if supported by scientific data showing that a change in policy would not present a significant and preventable risk to blood recipients. Although scientific evidence has not yet demonstrated that blood donated by MSM or a subgroup of these potential donors does not have a substantially increased rate of HIV infection compared to currently accepted blood donors, FDA [is] willing to consider new approaches."

Putting aside all that is wrong with the FDA making blood donors prove they should be allowed to donate, rather than allowing the American Red Cross and other similar groups to widen its pool of donors, screen donors for infections, viruses and diseases, and reject any infected blood, it is telling that Dr. Richard Benjamin, chief medical officer for the American Red Cross, explained to CBS News that with current testing, fewer than ten people have received HIV positive blood over the last ten years due to the 11-day "window period" for false negative tests. To put it differently, the odds of HIV transmission by infected blood is approximately 1 in 1.5-2 million, much worse odds than being struck by lightning or winning $10,000 playing Powerball.

America stands increasingly alone in perpetuating the stereotype that AIDS is a "gay disease." The United Kingdom, Brazil, Sweden, and Japan have a one-year deferral period, South Africa and Italy base their deferrals on the number of sexual partners a donor has had before donating, and Australia may change its one-year deferral policy to six-months due to advances in testing. China just lifted its ban on blood from lesbians and gay men who are not sexually active, making its policy on men who have had sex with men less restrictive than that of the United States FDA.

So call President Obama, Secretary Sebelius and Commissioner Hamburg, and voice your opposition to the FDA's discriminatory policy that has cost the Red Cross an estimated 50,000 blood donors. If the FDA still refuses to allow gay men to give blood, go buy a Powerball ticket.

voice box

INFORMED

Thanks for all you do to keep the community informed and moving.

Adanjesus Marin, SEIU Healthcare Pa Political Department
Lancaster City Human Relations Commissioner, Equality Pa

GREAT JOB!

Spiritualwalks

HISTORY

The problem with lgbt history is that, like most Millennials or those raised under the "self esteem" years, they think nothing of significance occurred before the miraculous moment of their historic birth. That's why when anything of significance happens, they pat themselves on the back as if it's a first ever event. Frankly, they are incapable of hearing even constructive criticism or any advice for that matter. All they really want to hear is that they are best thing since smart phones, at least that's been my experience over and over.

I think that's why, for example, the CDC says the rate of HIV infections for young gay men between the ages of 13 and 24 is skyrocketing. About 30,000 gay men die annually of AIDS yet we are only, the last census says, about 2% of the U.S. population. And we have the dubious distinction of being the quickest growing group of new infections. Gay/bi men account for 63% of total infections in recent years. Maybe if we built ways to teach our own history these numbers would come down?

An older reader

IMPORTANT STORIES

Thank you so much for including news of Erik Fasick's book on Tropical Storm Agnes in (May/June) Central Voice. We at the Historical Society of Dauphin County appreciate your efforts in supporting this book, which used our collection of photos as its basis. I enjoyed reading your whole issue - lots of interesting and important stories there.

John Robinson for HSDC

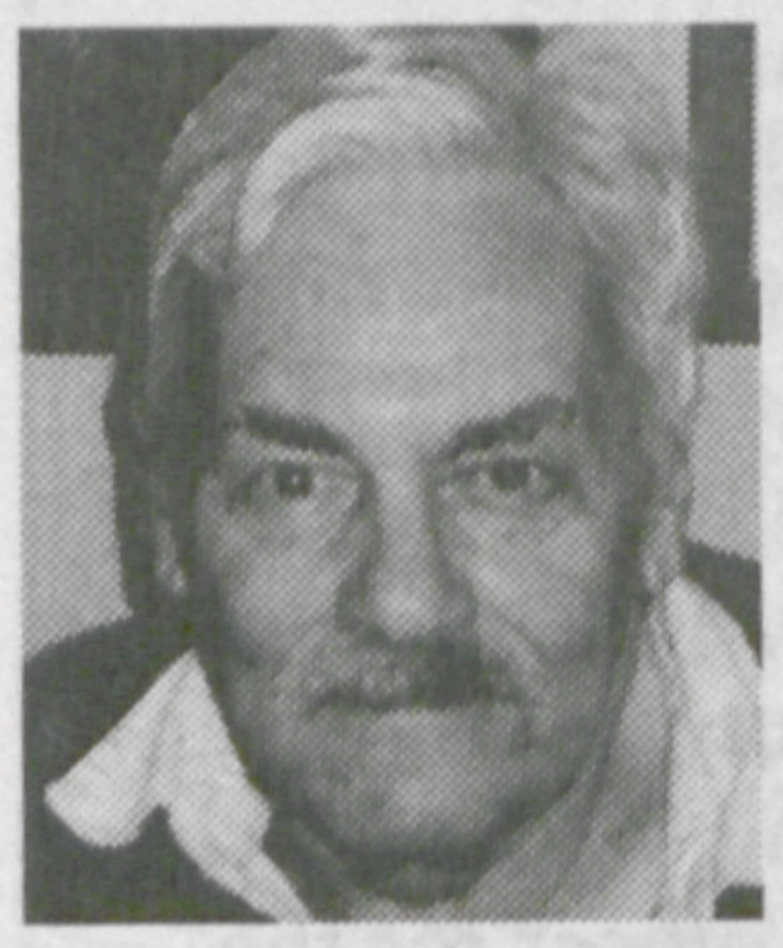
E-mail your thoughts to Central VOICE posops@aol.com

Jeanine Ruhsam Honored

Jeanine Ruhsam, Central Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce member, back row/center, co-chair/co-founder at Keystone Conference, president of TransCentralPA, designer/manager at Ruhsam Building & Design, was honored recently by Open Stage of Harrisburg as part of their annual "Women Who Care" luncheon. Also honored were, front row, left to right, Joan Prescott, Rachel Jones Williams, and, back row, left to right, Ellen Brody Hughes, Ruhsam and Oralia Dominic.

Adoption Option

continued from page one



John, 65, adopted Gregory, his partner of 44 years, in Dauphin County court.

Attorney Marianne Rudebusch, handled their adoption.

John and Gregory didn't want to wait for a long-sought legislative or court-ruled remedy to the inheritance tax and other discriminations they face.

Even though a May 2013 Franklin & Marshall College poll says 54% of state residents polled favor allowing same-sex couples to marry legally, the for/against marriage equality battle remains at full throttle in The Keystone State.

April 24 Phila. state House Rep. Mark Cohen (D) proposed legislation legalizing civil unions. House Bill 1178 "would amend Title 23 (Domestic Relations) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in marriage, adding a definition; and providing for civil unions."

In regular words, Cohen's bill "would make all state laws applicable to marriage also applicable to a civil union." The bill allows for reciprocity for civil unions performed legally in other states and recognizes same sex-marriages in other states as civil unions in Pennsylvania. Although an unlikely outcome, if passed couples like John and Gregory would have the weight of unfair rules lifted from their relationship.

Cohen calls civil unions a "middle-of-the-road compromise position between constitutionally banning and permitting gay marriages." Appeasing anticipated religious dissenters, he said, "Nothing in this bill would require any religion or any clergyman to perform any ceremony uniting people in a civil union. This legislation will merely offer committed gay couples the same legal rights that are bestowed upon married people without the status of marriage."

If passed, couples like John and Gregory wouldn't have to complete adoption proceedings, itself a circuitous remedy that may not be the solution for other couples.

One good political maneuver prompts another.

May 7 state House Rep. Darryl Metcalfe (R) re-introduced his bill which amends the state Constitution to specify "marriage is the legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife and no other legal union that is treated as marriage … shall be valid or recognized." That's on top of the state's existing Ridge-signed DOMA defining marriage as strictly between a male-female.

Last round Metcalfe introduced his bill with 40 supporters. This time the bill has 27 co-sponsors and none, unlike earlier iterations, are Democrats.

Openly-gay Phila. State Rep. Brian Sims said of Metcalfe's effort: "There is perhaps no better indication of how effectively we are moving forward on the advancement of LGBT civil rights in this state than Representative Metcalfe's bill. He has been trying to codify his personal religious beliefs surrounding LGBT Pennsylvanians since becoming a representative and each session, he receives less and less support."

Back in the everyday world where couples are denied legal recognition of relationships, time is of the essence as the state's slow as molasses legislative process creeps along with hollow appeasements followed by no real progress.

Tales abound within the region's LGBT community of families interfering with funeral arrangements because same-sex partners have no legal rights.

"One friend lived with his partner for 27 years. They were both previously married, raised kids, served in the military defending their country during war. And the deceased's family swooped in and legally kept the guy's partner from attending the funeral. Forced him right out their apartment. Cruel, so cruel," said one source who wished to remain anonymous because his own family does not acknowledge his relationship. "I worry the same will happen to us," he said.

"We first heard of the adoption route from a good friend Nino," John explains. At 86, Nino, and his partner Drew, 68, wanted to achieve peace of mind by knowing their affairs were in order. For example, in Pennsylvania, same-sex couples face a 15% inheritance tax, a tax that is only 4% if a family member inherits.

Longtime friend of John and Gregory, Attorney Marianne Rudebusch, got the legal ball rolling on the adoption proceeding. It started with "I'll write your will for your birthday gift," Rudebusch explained, a gesture that eventually ended up in Dauphin County Court as an adoption proceeding.

For one person to adopt another, including same-sex couples, a hearing is required. Judge Bruce F. Bratton heard John's plea that he be allowed to adopt his partner of 44 years.

"I didn't find the proceeding difficult although I was understandably nervous," John shared. He did have to answer Bratton's questions. That's the purpose of the hearing which allows a judge to assess the request.

When asked by Bratton why he wanted to adopt his partner, John answered, "For estate planning purposes." Although known as a conservative judge, meant here that he may stick to more literal interpretations of law, Bratton could find no legal reason to deny John's request.

"There's no real reason in state law not to allow these types of adoptions," Rudebusch says. That said, those thinking about going the adoption route must have a clear understanding of what it legally means, she stresses.

The relationship established "is one of parent and child," Rudebusch explains. "Bratton's decision declares John the parent and Gregory the child," she clarifies. Once granted the decision cannot be reversed.

Further, if the "child" in the proceeding has parent(s), the legal basis for that relationship is severed and any inheritance from the biological parent would be taxed at the higher rate. If the "parent" has parent(s), nothing changes.

"Clearly, this arrangement is not the answer for every couple. Only couples who can think through the options and level-headedly decide this is their best option to protect financial assets and other arrangements should consider this," Rudebusch points out.

"But if adoption is the answer, it removes many potential stressors around growing old, types of care that may eventually be needed, and, of course, in reality, death and dying issues," Rudebusch says with a lawyer's measured tone. "It can be a source of great joy and comfort," she concludes.

When he declared the adoption a go, Bratton looked at John said," Congratulations, it's a boy."

Professional Poker Player

contd from pg one

said in an interview: "I went home and told myself, 'You know what, now you're not going to focus on making money, you are going to focus on becoming happy.' For some time I felt miserable, I was unhappy. I was alone and upset. I buried myself in work, like many do when they have problems. I simply accepted that I was unhappy. About one year ago I decided to make a change. I told myself that I had had enough and that I was going to do what it takes to become happy."

Somerville spoke to CV on the same day the NBA's Jason Collins' came out.

"I know all too well the fears, anxieties, and emotional complexities that Jason Collins has likely grappled with, both personally and professionally. I am happy to see that he is experiencing the same compassion and support from his peers that I did when I came out a year ago."

Somerville's resolve in his personal life is the same quality that has launched his poker career. Listening to him on the interview call, it's easy to understand at how at age 16 he started with $5 and 18 months later had $100,000. "I hate to lose," he said like he meant it.

Somerville is ranked among the world's leading poker players with winnings close to $5 million over the course of his nine-year career. He's consistently performed well in major tournaments, including The World Series of Poker (WSOP), World Poker Tour (WPT), Spring Championship of Online Poker (SCOOP) and others.

Somerville wins but he also gives back. "I recently did a Monte Carlo Night for the LAPD, for wounded and fallen officers and their memorial fund."

He's gearing up for The World Series of Poker, May 28-July 15 in Las Vegas. "It's tough grind," he says, adding that he'll likely play in about half the 63 events during the series. He's away from Long Island, where he was born and raised, about 60 percent of the time.

When away Somerville creates another island.

"I'll take a comfortable rental away from casinos with long-time friends from the poker world. A place where we can kick back and relax," he explains.

Info: www.jcarver.org

Why Are Gender Diagnoses So Controversial?

LGBT Health, a new peer-reviewed journal launching in fall 2013, presents a timely and in-depth perspective on several key controversies surrounding gender diagnoses.

The American Psychiatric Association is now publishing the 5th version of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5). DSM-5 includes important revisions to the controversial diagnosis formerly known as Gender Identity Disorder (GID), in which an individual's physical make-up does not align with his or her inner experience of gender. Some had argued that this diagnosis was not only stigmatizing but that it did not meet criteria for classifying it as a mental disorder. The DSM-5 Workgroup chose to retain the disorder classification but to change the name of the disorder to Gender Dysphoria to reduce the stigma associated with the diagnosis. The article "Controversies in Gender Diagnoses" by Jack Drescher, MD, is the first article to be published in LGBT Health, and is available free online on the LGBT Health (http://www.liebertpub.com/lgbt) website.

"Given the complexity of the issues with which both the DSM-5 and ICD-11 work groups have had to grapple, and the level of interest in, and controversy surrounding, the gender diagnoses, we are very fortunate to have Dr. Drescher, a member of both workgroups, shed light on their deliberations, their proposed solutions, and areas where there is currently little consensus," says Editor-in-Chief, William Byne, MD, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (New York, NY).

White House Declares Pride Month

Pride in south central Pennsylvania is celebrated in Lancaster each June and in Harrisburg at the end of each July. Traditionally, Pride month is designated during June to celebrate The Stonewall Riots, June 28, 1969. In celebration of the fight-back, Pride parades and events sprang up all over the nation.

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IN THE
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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release May 31, 2013
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER
PRIDE MONTH, 2013

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
A PROCLAMATION

For more than two centuries, our Nation has struggled to transform the
ideals of liberty and equality from founding promise into lasting reality. Lesbian,
gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans and their allies have been
hard at work on the next great chapter of that history -- from the patrons of The
Stonewall Inn who sparked a movement to service members who can finally be
honest about who they love to brave young people who come out and speak out
every day.

This year, we celebrate LGBT Pride Month at a moment of great hope and
progress, recognizing that more needs to be done. Support for LGBT equality is
growing, led by a generation which understands that, in the words of Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr., "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." In the past
year, for the first time, voters in multiple States affirmed marriage equality for
same-sex couples. State and local governments have taken important steps to
provide much-needed protections for transgender Americans.

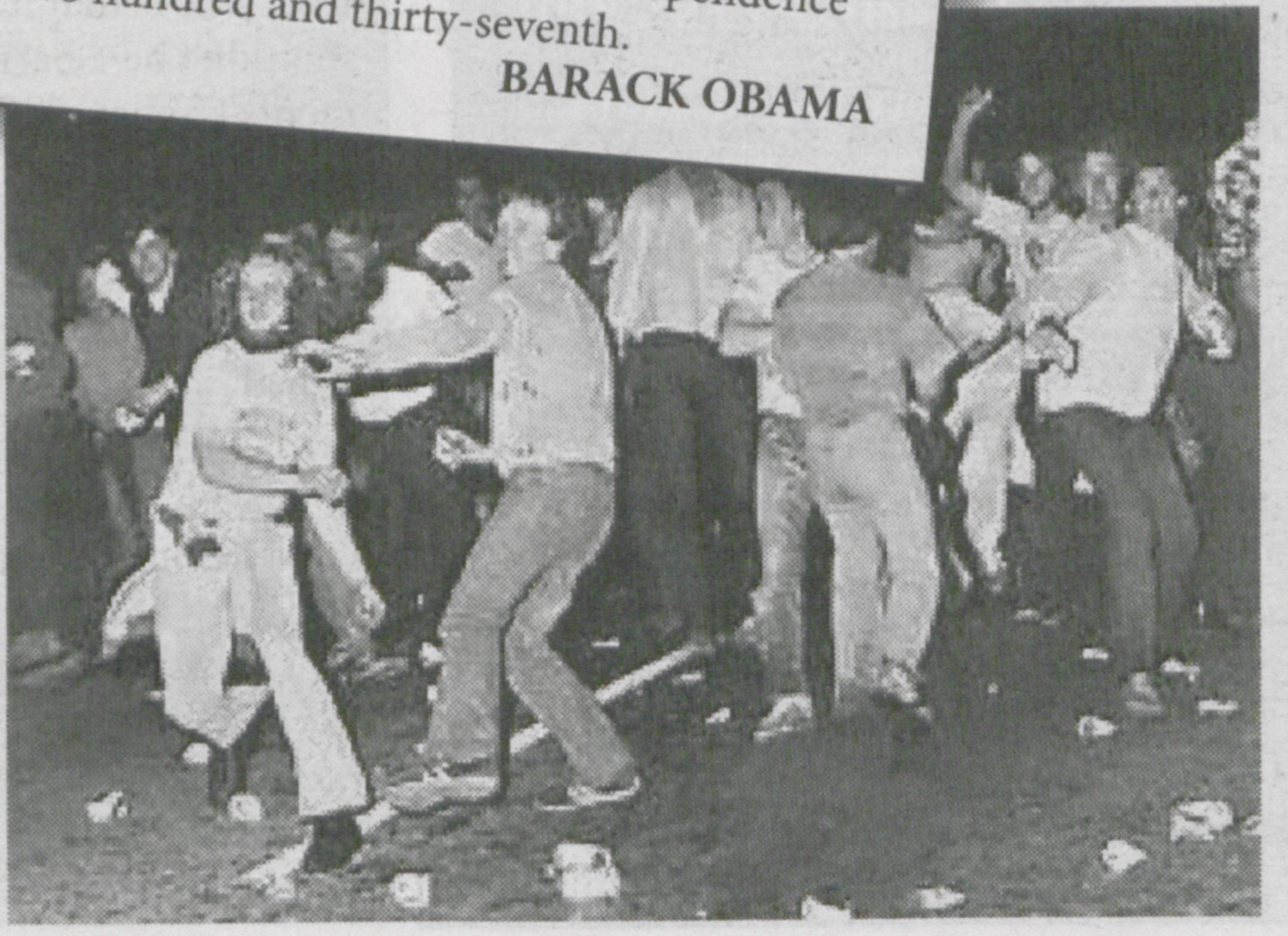
My Administration is a proud partner in the journey toward LGBT equali-
ty. We extended hate crimes protections to include attacks based on sexual orien-
tation or gender identity and repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." We lifted the HIV
entry ban and ensured hospital visitation rights for LGBT patients. Together, we
have investigated and addressed pervasive bullying faced by LGBT students, pro-
hibited discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Federal
housing, and extended benefits for same-sex domestic partners. Earlier this year,
I signed a reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that pro-
hibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in the
implementation of any VAWA-funded program. And because LGBT rights are
human rights, my Administration is implementing the first-ever Federal strategy
to advance equality for LGBT people around the world.

We have witnessed real and lasting change, but our work is not complete.
I continue to support a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act, as
well as the Respect for Marriage Act. My Administration continues to implement
the Affordable Care Act, which beginning in 2014, prohibits insurers from deny-
ing coverage to consumers based on their sexual orientation or gender identity,
as well as the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, which addresses the disparate impact
of the HIV epidemic among certain LGBT sub-communities. We have a long way
to go, but if we continue on this path together, I am confident that one day soon,
from coast to coast, all of our young people will look to the future with the same
sense of promise and possibility. I am confident because I have seen the talent,
passion, and commitment of LGBT advocates and their allies, and I know that
when voices are joined in common purpose, they cannot be stopped.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States
of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the
laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2013 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisex-
ual, and Transgender Pride Month. I call upon the people of the United States to
eliminate prejudice everywhere it exists, and to celebrate the great diversity of the
American people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day
of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand thirteen, and of the Independence
of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-seventh.

BARACK OBAMA



The American Academy of Physician Assistants this month elected Diane Bruessow to its Board of Directors. *Photo courtesy: Diane Bruessow*

Lesbian Elected to Physician Assistants Board

The American Academy of Physician Assistants recently elected a lesbian woman with two decades of experience in LGBT-related health care to its board of directors.

Diane Bruessow, who is at-large member of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association Board of Directors, founded the Long Island Lesbian Cancer Initiative in 2000. She also works at Healthy Transitions, a New Jersey practice with more than 600 transgender clients that will soon open a second location in Queens, N.Y.

Bruessow, who is a past president of the AAPA's LGBT PA Caucus, has been a physician assistant since 1993.

"In our AAPA environment, times are definitely moving in the right direction," she told the Washington Blade when asked about the importance of her election. "To me the biggest thing about

continued on page 8

York events

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who knew?

By Benjamin C. Dunlap, Jr, Attorney at Law

The U.S. Military Extends Benefits to Same-sex Couples

As we await a June decision from the United States Supreme Court in the Windsor case dealing with the Federal Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, the United States military has already moved forward to extend some benefits to same-sex partners of service members. These benefits are being extended whether a same-sex couple is legally married or otherwise qualifies as domestic partners.

Shortly before leaving office in February, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that military service members and their same-sex partners who sign a "Declaration of Domestic Partnership" will be entitled to several benefits that were previously only offered to military spouses, including dependent military identification cards. With the identification cards, partners would be allowed to visit their service member partner in military hospitals as well as access the commissaries and base exchanges and gain unescorted access to bases.

Additional approved benefits include access to recreation programs, space-available travel, child care, legal assistance, school transportation for minors, emergency leave, counseling programs, and joint duty assignments.

Survivor benefits such as life insurance payments, thrift savings plan beneficiary designations, eligibility to receive a deceased service member's effects and remains, eligibility to be presented the U.S. flag, and designation as a person having an interest in a missing member were also approved.

These changes will go into effect on October 1, 2013, and are estimated to affect approximately 5600 active duty troops, 3400 National Guard troops and 8000 retirees. After the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the military is moving quickly to implement policies and reach the point where discrimination based on sexual orientation no longer has a place in the military.

Until the Supreme Court determines the fate of DOMA, however, military personnel and retirees with same-sex partners will not be able to receive health care benefits and housing allowances. Former Secretary of Defense Panetta stated that if the Supreme Court strikes down DOMA, the Department was prepared to interpret terms such as spouse and marriage "without regard to sexual orientation" and as such full military benefits will be granted to same-sex partners.

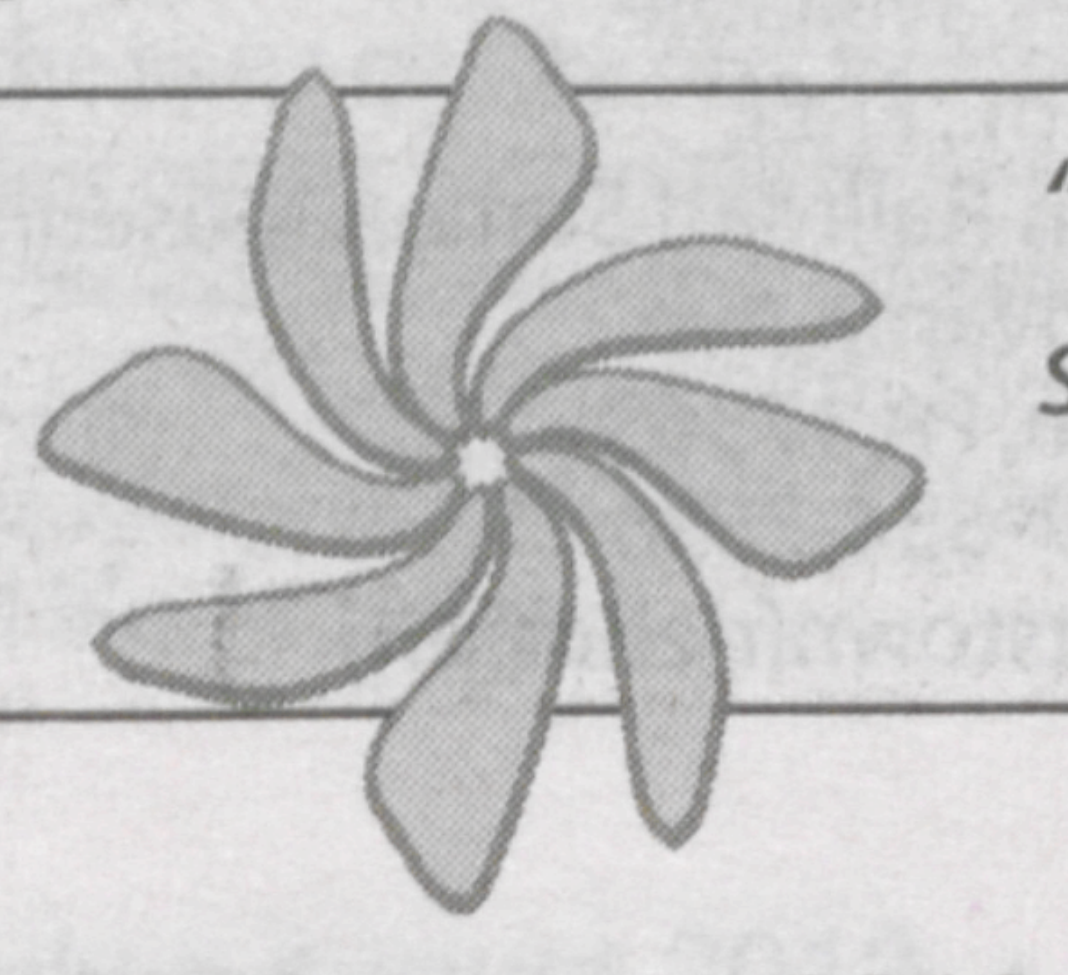
In addition, several other benefits that are not specifically prohibited under DOMA, but that present "complex legal and policy challenges" have not been included in the benefits offered by the Department. These benefits include on-base family housing, burial rights for Arlington National and other veterans' cemeteries, and the extension of command sponsorship to the same-sex partners of military personnel stationed overseas. The latter would impact the ability of same-sex partners to acquire visas and exercise certain legal rights while traveling overseas.

In a separate decision, the United States Marine Corps announced a policy that now requires any social club open to military spouses to also allow same-sex partners. Failure to comply would result in the club being banned from operation on base. In a memo to legal offices across the branch, the Marine Staff Judge Advocate warned against discrimination based on sexual orientation, citing a recent decision by the officers' spouses club at the Army's Fort Bragg to deny access to the same-sex spouse of a female Army lieutenant. In that case, Ashley Broadway, the newlywed wife of Lt. Col. Heather Mack, was blocked from joining the spouses club at Fort Bragg, N.C. A national military spouses organization accused the club of denying membership to Broadway only because she is a lesbian.

Although the Marines don't control what these social clubs do, the clubs get support from the Marine Corps so that they can hold their meetings on base or at Department of Defense facilities. In order to receive that support, the clubs have to follow Marine Corp policies including policies that support Marine Corps family readiness and that treat everyone with dignity and respect.

It is unlikely the U.S. Military's actions to extend benefits to same-sex couples will have any appreciable effect on the Supreme Court's decision in the Windsor case. Even if the Supreme Court strikes down DOMA, as is widely expected, that alone will not end marriage inequities and confusion. That will only occur when there is marriage equality in all states, which may or may not occur in connection with the companion Proposition 9 case. However, the end of DOMA would be a huge step in the right direction.

Benjamin C. Dunlap, Jr. is a partner with Harrisburg-based law firm, Nauman, Smith, Shissler & Hall, LLP. His practice focuses on business and employment law for companies ranging in size from startups to major national corporations.



"My friends, welcome to the other side of the rainbow."

State Senator Ed Murray, at signing ceremony legalizing gay marriage in Washington

Interfaith Prayers for Peace and Justice

Central Voice Photos

May 6 a variety of religious denominations gathered at Harrisburg's Pine Street Presbyterian Church to celebrate the 5th Annual Interfaith Service: Prayers for Peace and Justice. Participating were Harrisburg's Metropolitan Community Church of the Spirit, shown here. The event's founding sponsors are The Interfaith Alliance of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Pine Street Presbyterian Church. Co-sponsoring organizations are Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Harrisburg, Beth El Temple, Blue Mountain Lotus Society, Catholic Worker House, Harrisburg; Christian Churches United of the Tri-County Area, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church, Elizabethtown College, Franklin & Marshall College Office of the Chaplain, Harrisburg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Hindu American Religious Institute, InterReligious Forum of Greater Harrisburg, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lebanon Valley College, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, Market Square Presbyterian Church, Messiah College, Old Catholic Church, Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic, Pax Christi, Peace Advocates of Carlisle Presbytery, Penn Central Conference, United Church of Christ, Religion and Society Center, Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren, Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg, The Sanctuary Academy of Universal Enlightenment, Sikh Society of Harrisburg, Spiritual Assembly of Bahá'í's of Harrisburg, Susquehanna Conference, United Methodist Church, Temple Ohev Sholom, Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, United Methodist Advocacy in Pennsylvania, Western Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church, and World Affairs Council of Harrisburg.

Lesbian Elected

continued from page 7

all of this is that it wasn't a barrier and it shouldn't be a barrier. When those moments happen they need to be celebrated."

Bruessow added she feels her work on LGBT-specific health care will prove an asset to her fellow board members.

"This just adds another level of knowledge and informed decision making to the board," she said. "When an issue comes up relating to the effect of health in our communities, than it helps to have someone in that room who is able to speak to it with some experience."

Founded in 1968, the AAPA has grown to include more than 40,000 members from across the country.

The Alexandria, Va., based group in the 1980s endorsed "equal rights for all person" and "guaranteeing such rights." The AAPA also added sexual orientation and gender identity and expression to its non-discrimination policy on how physician assistants deliver health care to their patients.

Bruessow also worked to secure passage of an AAPA resolution that opposes so-called "conversion" or "reparative" therapy designed to change a person's sexual orientation.

"When this representative body of my colleagues stood up and said 'yeah, you know this is not okay to do this to our patients,' it was a really meaningful moment," Bruessow said.

The Foundation For Hope
...Never Live A Day Without Hope!

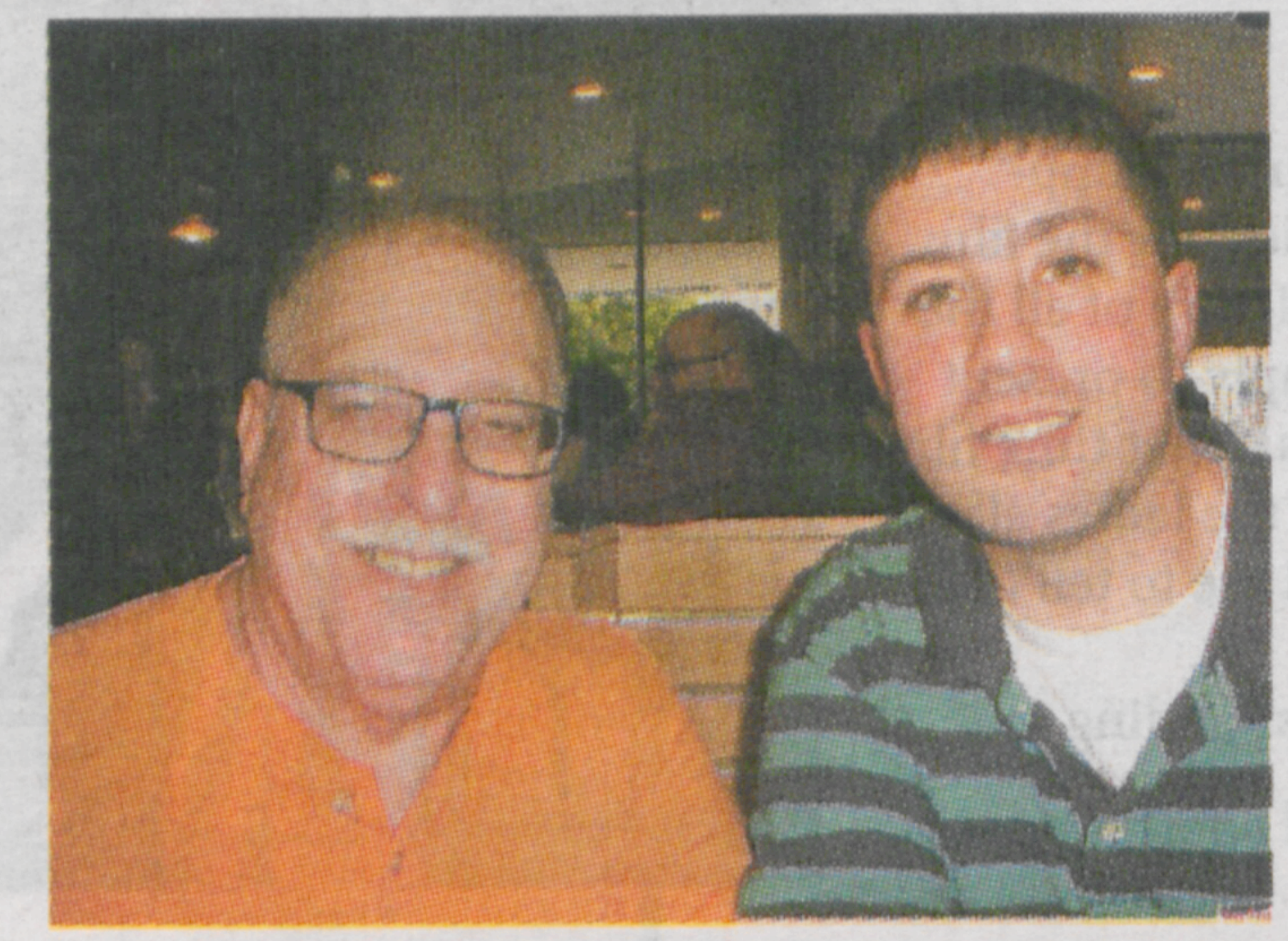
Foundation of Hope Addresses Bullying

May 11 The Foundation for Hope addressed bullying and related LGBT issues through a panel discussion and smaller group discussions. The foundation is a community outreach program created to raise awareness of the harmful realities of bullying, depression, and suicide.

The organization's mission is to create awareness of the harmful realities of bullying, depression, and suicide. "Through education, support, and intervention we aim to change public perception and foster an environment of acceptance, love, and mutual respect," according to the web site.

Jesse Gantt founded the foundation with the mission to educate those suffering because of bullying, depression, or suicidal ideations "that they are not alone," he told Central Voice. He also stressed that "depression is not forever and life does get better" for those who feel hopeless.

Central Voice Photos



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Filmmaker, Cecilio Asuncion

Enrico Dungca Photo

What's the T? Explores Transitioning

What's the T? by out filmmaker Cecilio Asuncion explores the lives of five transgender women as they fight to make their marks on the world.

These are the riveting stories of courageous young adults facing adversity head-on in order to achieve their life dreams on their own terms. They are Armani, a nurse at a rehab facility who competes nights in the underground ballroom scene; Vi, a pre-med student; Mia, a former homeless teen elected to a post on the San Francisco Youth Commission and now working toward a career in politics; the boldly independent Nya; and Cassandra, a stage performer with sites to conquer the world. Film production began in 2011 with filmmaker Cecilio Asuncion, who also stars in the film, following the young women for over a year.

What's the T? is currently playing select film festivals throughout the world.

"I first conceived the idea for What's the T? while watching Anderson Cooper's daytime television talk show, Anderson Live," recalls Cecilio Asuncion. The show featured Danann, an eight-year-old classified as gender disordered. The diagnosis came as a relief to the child's parents, after previous doctors had incorrectly labeled Danann with bipolar disorder, ADHD and dyslexia. "I was aware that several documentaries had already been made on transgender women," says Asuncion, "but they mostly focused on the transition phase and ended with the gender reaffirmation surgery. None covered what happened after. It got me to thinking, "What's the T?".

Asuncion wanted to show Danann, and youth like her, that the world is full of possibility for them and that big dreams are attainable. The first challenge came with selecting the best subjects for his film. "I met a number of transgender women who were all leading such wonderful lives," he recalls. "It was difficult to choose among them."

Cassandra Cass, Nya Ampon, Rakash Armani, Vi Le, and Mia Tu Mutch made the final cut because each could be a positive role model for Danann. The women all debunk the commonly held myth that few options in life are open to trans women as we see them navigating diverse fields including entertainment, politics and even medicine.

Asuncion is quick to point out that the film is not a research project. "One person scolded me on Facebook saying I am not Jane Goodall and trans women are not my gorillas."

"People are allowed their presumptions," he says, "but my intention for the film was never to paint a general picture of all the world's trans women. It is simply to present the lives of five individuals. As a first time film maker, I am very grateful that the ladies all trusted my vision and allowed me to tell their stories."

Audiences have been responding to

continued on next page >

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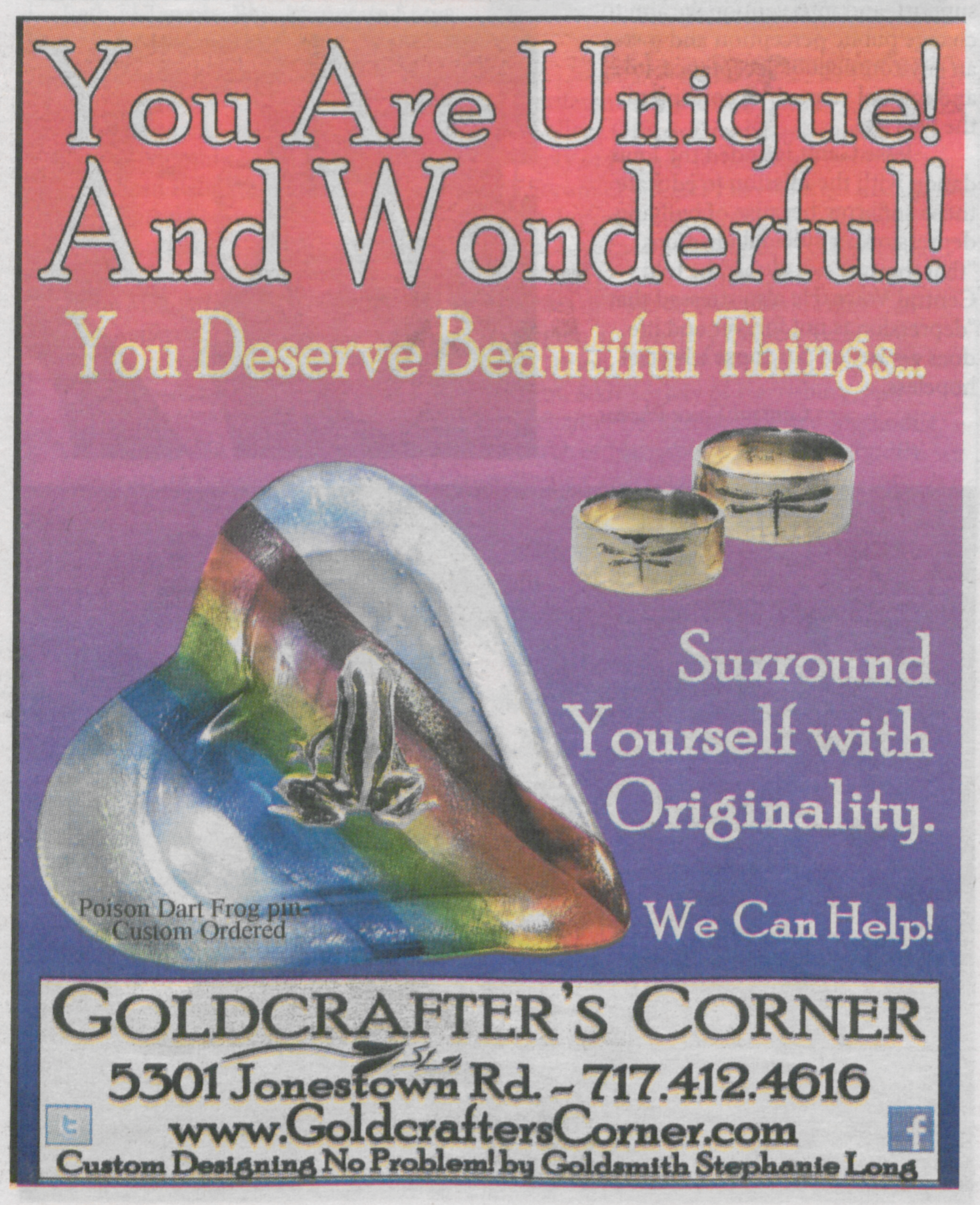

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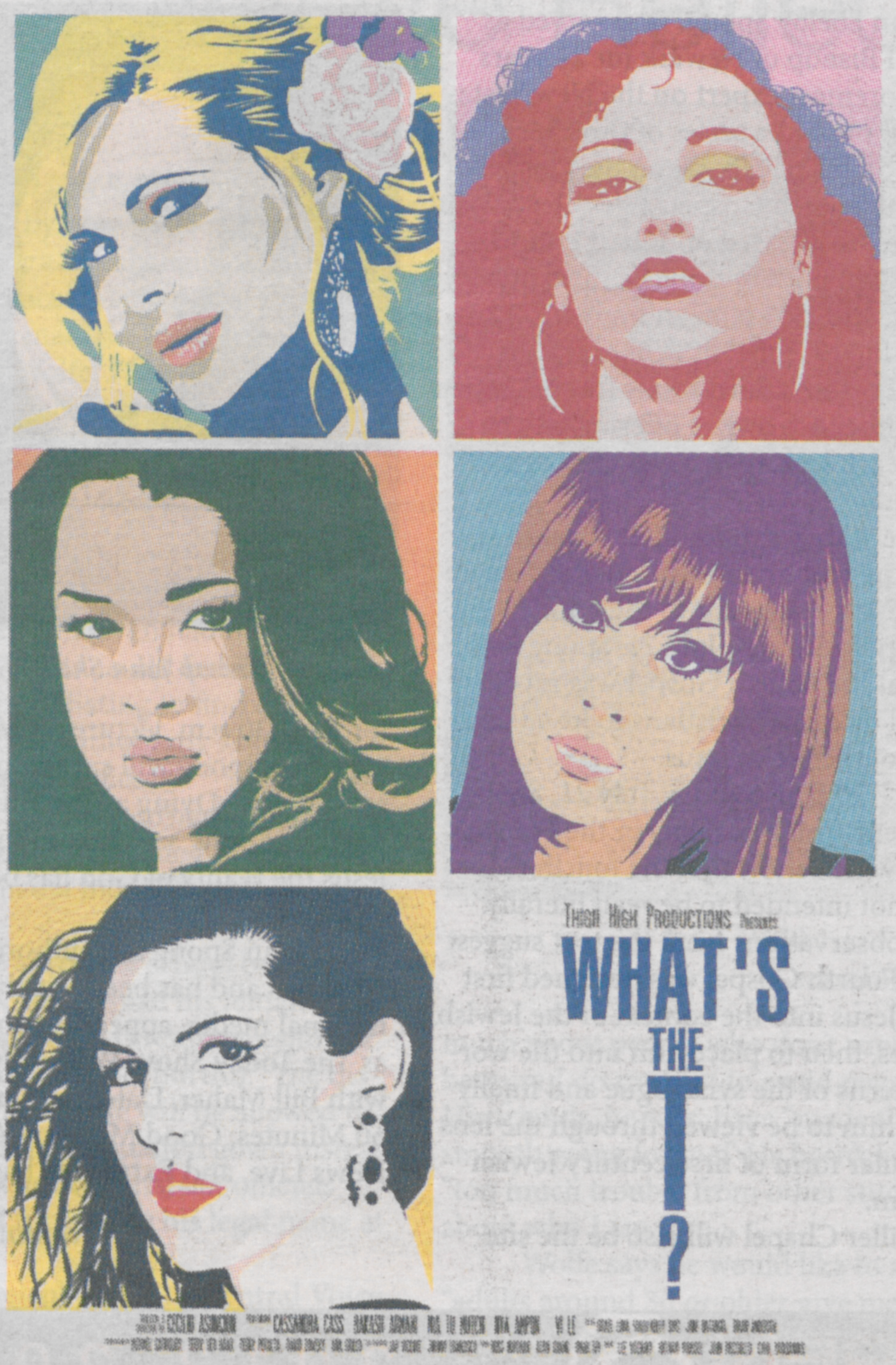

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Armani's comical candidness and Cassandra's tenacity. Nya's conviction that "being fish" – a term used to define one's pass-ability as a woman – is not important has been resonating with trans audiences while others enjoy Vi's raw story telling.

"I could not have picked a better set of women to go on this journey with," says Asuncion.

And what a journey it is. The film depicts transitioning as a different experience for everyone. Some opt to simply grow out their hair or alter their wardrobe as part of their transition. Others choose hormone therapy.

The women also face hurdles. Viewers witness just how challenging it can be for some transgender women to find their footing into adulthood. They encounter pervasive discrimination in the workplace as many employers view them incorrectly as psychologically unstable.

And love is hard to find because some must first learn to love themselves.

Even Vi, the young med student who seems to have it all together, opens up in the film on how she considered suicide following her parent's refusal to accept her decision to transition. It reminds us that more than 50% of transgender youth will make at least one attempt at committing suicide before they are twenty years old. Vi was lucky. She had a little brother who accepted and loved her for who she was and pleaded with her to not take her life. Eventually, her parents would come around, too. In fact, after the San Francisco showing of the film, Vi's mother approached Asuncion and thanked him for creating What's the T?, even expressing how proud she is of her daughter today.

The family unit is important to most in the trans community. Many find additional family or in some cases, a substitute family with other trans women.

Asuncion wishes more would find family within the entire LGBT community. "As a gay man, I am part of the LGBT community, but it's amazing to me how even we within the community barely know anything about each other. Lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender all stay within their own circles and rarely interact with one another," he says.

Asuncion believes that in order for the LGBT community to win acceptance from mainstream, all within the LGBT umbrella must aid one another. "It's important to go out there and develop friendships with other members of the LGBT community that are different from ourselves. People will be surprised what they learn about others and about themselves.

"Doing a documentary on transgender women, I know that I have changed as a person. I'm inspired by these incredibly resilient women."

In the end, viewers learn that everyone's T is different. "My T is to tell," proclaims Asuncion. "As a filmmaker, I aim to tell stories that will inspire all to be the best they can be." Visit Whatsthetfilm.com

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DISCRIMINATION IS WRONG
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Central Voice Photo

End LGBT Discrimination in PA Group Protests

May 14 a group gathered at Harrisburg's 3rd & Walnut Sts., near the Capital Complex, to show support for bills now before both chambers of the state General Assembly: House Bill 300 and Senate Bill 300. The twin measures call for equal civil rights for LGBT taxpayers that would include protections generally known as "public accommodation" protections against discrimination. In particular, the bills would make it illegal to be fired from for being gay, denied housing or credit, or access to other public services. Katie Somers, volunteer leader of Marriage Equality of PA – HLLY Chapter who organized the event said, "The LGBT community is comprised of law abiding, tax paying, professional citizens and we seek the same legal protections as every other Pennsylvanian."

Progressive Christians Present Bishop John Shelby Spong

John Shelby Spong, who served as Episcopal Bishop of Newark for 24 years and is a foremost expert on the New Testament, will present a series of three lectures focusing on his new book on the Gospel of John, "The Fourth Gospel: Tales of a Jewish Mystic," to be released on June 11, 2013.

He will present three lectures: July 21, 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and July 22, 7:30 p.m. in Miller Chapel of Lebanon Valley College. Lecture admission is free and open to the public. A free-will offering will be taken at each lecture to cover the costs of this event.

The widely sought-after speaker and best-selling author will open with a lecture titled "A New Approach to the Fourth Gospel" at 3 p.m. Sunday, July 21. Spong will argue that the Fourth Gospel was misinterpreted by early Christians to be a literal account of the life of Jesus.

At 7:30 p.m. Sunday, July 21, Spong will present "Internal Signs in the Fourth Gospel" which show that the fourth Gospel was not intended to be read literally. Spong's observations from the text suggest that the Fourth Gospel was designed first to place Jesus into the context of the Jewish scriptures, then to place him into the worship patterns of the synagogue and finally to allow him to be viewed through the lens of a popular form of first-century Jewish mysticism.

Bishop John Shelby Spong

Miller Chapel will also be the site for the 7:30 p.m. lecture on Monday, July 22, when Spong will speak on "The Cross as a Throne: Dying as the Fulfillment of Loving." Spong says that in the humanity of Jesus the reality of God has been met and engaged.

John Spong has authored more than 20 books and has been widely featured in national media, appearing on venues such as The Today Show, Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher, Dateline, Larry King Live, 60 Minutes, Good Morning America, FOX News Live, and Extra. He has taught at

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Transgender Teen Issak Wolfe Reflects

By Central Voice

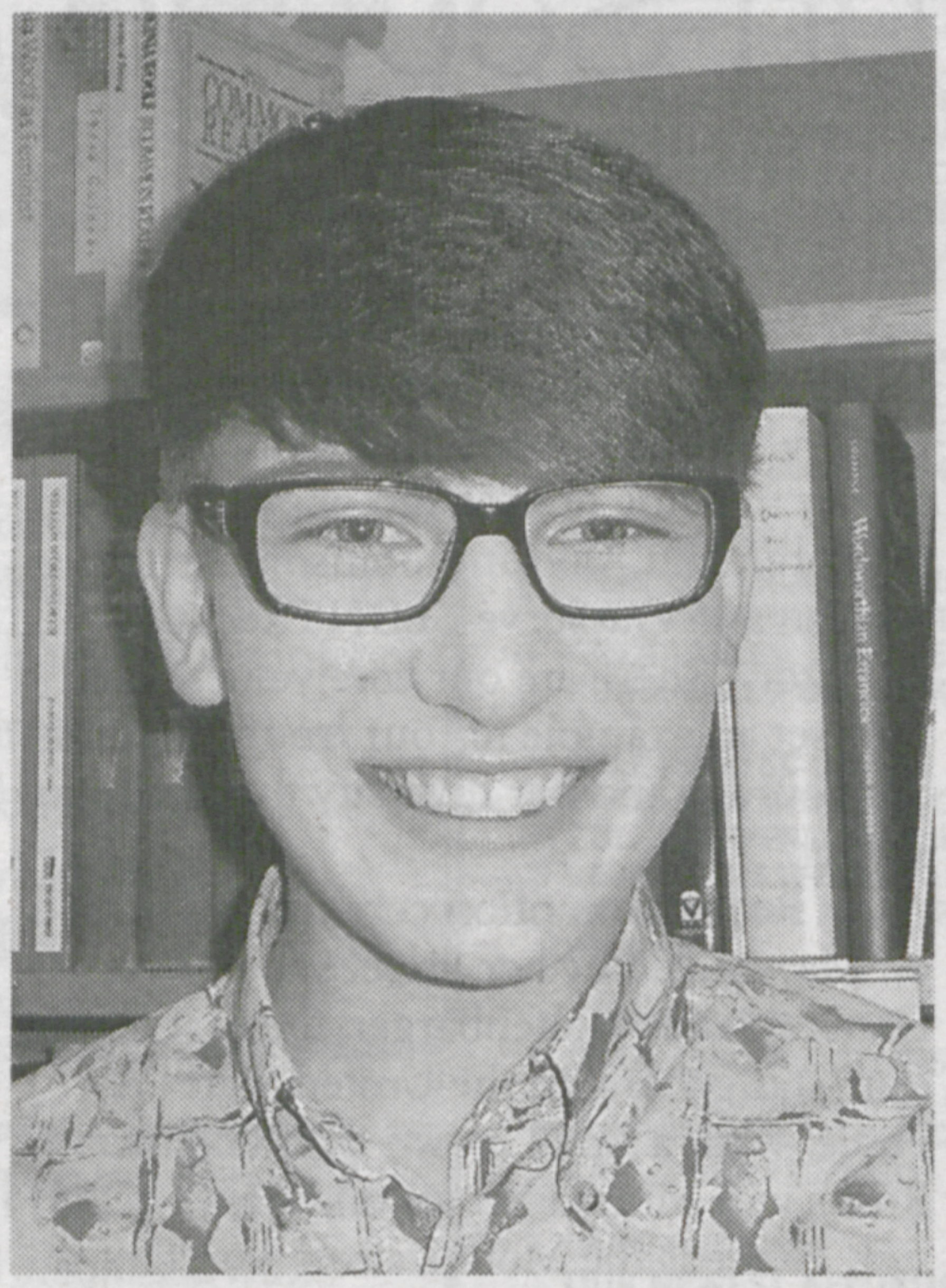
Red Lion High School student Issak Wolfe's story is by now well known.

Born Sierra Stambaugh and now undergoing a medically-supervised transition from female to male the he began about two years ago, Wolfe, 18, entered his high school prom royalty contest as a candidate for prom king. High school principal Mark Shue listed Wolfe by his birth name on the ballot as a candidate for prom queen, a change made without notice to Wolfe.

Wolfe explains that Issak is the name he would have been given had he been born a male, and Wolfe is an old family name.

"It was humiliating to find out the change was made without my knowledge," Wolfe told Central Voice.

Since his public journey around the prom incident began, Wolfe has responded to a series of media inquiries as the issue unfolds.



Issak Wolfe
Central Voice Photo

Next, he asked the school board to reverse its decision to read his female name at his June graduation ceremony, calling it "pointless and incredibly hurtful." The district has said that Wolfe will be allowed to wear a boy's black graduation gown instead of the yellow worn by girls, but officials insist they will list him by his legal name at the ceremony.

On the telephone with Central Voice as he travelled to the school board meeting, Wolfe said he is fighting the decision and is calling for a policy to protect future students from discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

"This was very hurtful to me. If I can prevent somebody else from being hurt in that way, that's what I want to do," he said.

Wolfe is working on a legal name change. He said in his statement to the school board that the district's insistence on reading his female name at graduation "serves no other purpose than to hurt me more." Wolfe is being assisted in his plight by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Wolfe tells Central Voice he plans on "going to college to study business. I like art and hanging out with my friends and my girlfriend."

For all the consternation over his simple request to be recognized by his new identity, Wolfe reports that he hasn't "heard much about people who don't support me because I do my best to avoid negativity." His friends, he says, have "made this very smooth going for me." He hasn't ever had "too much trouble from other students" about who I am.

Wolfe says he would like to note that "adults around 30 or older give me more problems than I've ever faced in high school or by my peers. This is a positive because it tells us times are changing."

As far as his school's decisions, Wolfe says "I'm not sure what the school was thinking but I know they have a better system in place for students than I was able to use."

"I'm disappointed with their decision to bully one of their students and I think they will make better decisions in the future regardless of a new policy to keep their name out of the news," Wolfe predicts.

With an earned right to be philosophical, Wolfe says, "Every journey is different. So far mine has been easy living in a fairly small town where you would expect worse like you see in the movies. But I have a great family, great friends, and a community that either understands or doesn't bother with it."

Bishop

continued from page 12

Harvard, Drew, the University of the Pacific and the Berkeley Graduate Theological Union. Selling over a million copies, his books include "Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World, Eternal Life: A New Vision, Jesus for the Non-Religious," "Why Christianity Must Change or Die" and his autobiography, "Here I Stand." His weekly online column reaches thousands of subscribers all over the world. The latest book, "The Fourth Gospel," as well as many of his other books will be available for sale at the lectures at a reduced price.

The lectures are sponsored by the Progressive Christians of Central Pennsylvania, an organization of Christians who affirm the variety and depth of human experience and the richness of each person's search for meaning while encouraging the use of sound scholarship and critical inquiry to understand the presence of God in human life.

Info: Darrell Woomer, woomer@lvc.edu; 717-8676135

Court Rules PA Schools Have No Obligation to Protect Students

By Victoria,
Keystone Student Voice

The United States Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit ruled on June 5th that school districts have no obligation to protect students from abuse and harassment from their peers. Brittany and Emily Morrow, siblings who attended Blackhawk High School in Beaver County, were subject to racially motivated verbal harassment and physical attacks by another student. When Brittany was assaulted in the lunchroom, she was suspended for retaliating against her attacker, who was then charged in juvenile court with harassment, terroristic threats, and assault. The school readmitted the attacker after a period of expulsion. She continued to verbally and physically attack Brittany upon returning to the school. Emily was also bullied by students at Blackhawk High School. When the Morrow's parents approached the school board, they were advised to pull their daughters out of the school, which they did in 2008. The Morrow family sued the Blackhawk School District for violation of the fourteenth amendment.

In the ruling, the court claimed that, "Parents in [the victim's] position should be able to send their children off to school with some level of comfort that those children will be safe from bullies… Nonetheless, the Constitution does not provide judicial remedies for every social ill." The decision stated that public schools have no special relationship with their students which necessitates that they protect their students from harm brought about by their peers.

This verdict is incredibly troubling for a number of reasons. It conflicts with anti-bullying legislation across the country, many of which state that the school has an obligation to monitor and follow up on incidents of bullying. Additionally, if the school district has no legal responsibility for the actions students take towards one another, how are school suspensions and expulsions for violent behavior to be regulated? Under this ruling, is it possible that a school district could arbitrarily assign disciplinary action against students who exhibit violent behavior, with some students receiving no punishment at all?

There is no word yet on whether or not the Morrow family plans on pursuing the case further. Perhaps with continuing legal action, a more clear answer on school violence will emerge.

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Christopher Bram's Novels Set for Re-issue

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Eagle Scout Christopher Bram

Best known for his 1995 novel Father of Frankenstein, about film director James Whale, that was made into the 1998 movie Gods and Monsters starring Ian McKellen, Lynn Redgrave, and Brendan Fraser, Christopher Bram is busy with release of four novels and a book of essays by Open Road.

Bram's nine novels range in subject matter from gay life in the 1970s to the career of a Victorian musical clairvoyant to the frantic world of theater people in contemporary New York.

Publisher's Weekly described Bram's first novel, Surprising Myself (1987), as "A fresh tone, exuberance and light-handed humor mark this first novel about a homosexual's coming of age in Manhattan." Readers meet Joel Scherzenlieb at Boy Scout camp, (Bram was an Eagle Scout) where his CIA agent father has left him to work as a counselor for the summer. Joel doesn't yet know the nature of his sexuality, nor does he find out at camp, since his father soon whisks him off to live at his mother's farm in Virginia. With no money for college, Joel works the farm with his mother, maternal grandmother and sister Liza. Later, he runs into Corey, his only friend from camp days; finding their way to bed, they begin the relationship that's the heart of the book.

Library Journal noted Joel described his family as a "collection of solitaires" - his father a spy, mother a back-to-the-earth nut, sister a failed feminist in a bad marriage.

The first chapter is available at http://www.scribd.com/doc/142842992/Surprising-Myself-by-Christopher-Bram-Excerpt

Reader's may recognize Bram's name from his latest book, Eminent Outlaws: The Gay Writers Who Changed America, which covers a 50-year period and deliciously fills in details on the lives of a dozen writers changing the fabric of our culture. An interview with Bram on the book is available at Lambda Literary Review.

Also set for re-issue are Hold Tight, In Memory of Angel Clare, Gossip and Mapping the Territory, a book of essays.

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Air Force Major General Patricia Rose Pins on Second Star

Major General Patricia "Trish" Rose became the U.S. military's highest ranking out gay officer.

"Our congratulations go out to Major General Rose and Lieutenant Roth, both for General Rose's promotion and for their integrity in being honest and open about who they are," said Allyson Robinson, Army veteran and OutServe-SLDN Executive Director. "These are our core values, and they set an example for our troops that it is our courage and our diversity that make us strong."

Rose's promotion ceremony was held on May 31, led by her direct supervisor, General Janet Wolfenbarger, the first female four-star general in the United States Air Force. With a small crowd in attendance, Rose's wife pinned her second star.

Rose is the Mobilization Assistant to the Commander, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. A logistician, she's served assignments in both aircraft maintenance and transportation in seven different commands. Her reserve assignments include command of the 36th Aerial Port Squadron at McChord AFB, Washington, where her squadron won the dual distinction of being selected for an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and Air Mobility Command's Total Force Air Reserve Component Aerial Port Unit of the Year.

Rose and Roth were legally married in their home state of Washington after marriage equality became legal in the state last year. When Rose earned her first star, she asked her friend and neighbor, Colonel Grethe Cammermeyer, to pin it in a private promotion ceremony. Cammermeyer, a fellow Washingtonian, was ejected from the Washington National Guard for admitting she was gay and became a prominent advocate for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Her story was told in the film "Serving in Silence."

Major General Patricia Rose

In her civilian capacity, Rose is the public relations and marketing director for a local hospital.

"I'm particularly proud of the Air Force, and of our Reserve components, for continuing to demonstrate that our diversity is our strength," said Josh Seefried, Co-Chair of the OutServe-SLDN board of director. "Our best wishes go to Major General Rose and her wife – as well as our gratitude for their integrity in demonstrating the Air Force's commitment to family as well as to service."

Lancaster events

MARIETTA GARDEN TOUR
Jun 9, 2013
The Annual Marietta Garden Tour is Sunday, June 9, 11a.m. to 4p.m., rain or shine, $8 advance, $10 door. The tour features nine gardens within the Borough of Marietta. Vendors offering plant related items will be at the Community House. In addition, lectures will be offered at the Community House pertaining to planting an herb garden for teas and composting for gardeners. Advance tickets can be purchased at River Road Produce (Route 441), Bron's Deli (W. Market St., Marietta) Susquehanna Chamber of Commerce (Route 30 exit, Columbia), Marietta Wax Company (E. Market St., Marietta), or by calling 717-426-4317 or 717-994-6661.

DEMUTH MUSEUM: GARDENS AND MORE
July 12 and ongoing
The Demuth Museum is mounting a special exhibition this spring in conjunction with the 30th Anniversary of our Garden Tour! This exhibition, comprised of works from the Demuth Museum permanent collection as well as private collections focuses on Demuth's watercolors of flowers from his mother's garden. Demuth's portrayal of the flowers from this garden span his career and give us a unique opportunity to explore his evolution towards a mature style. This Victorian garden, which lay just outside Demuth's home, is still enjoyed by Museum visitors today. Museum hours: Tues-Sat 10-4 and Sunday 1-4. (717) 299-9940.

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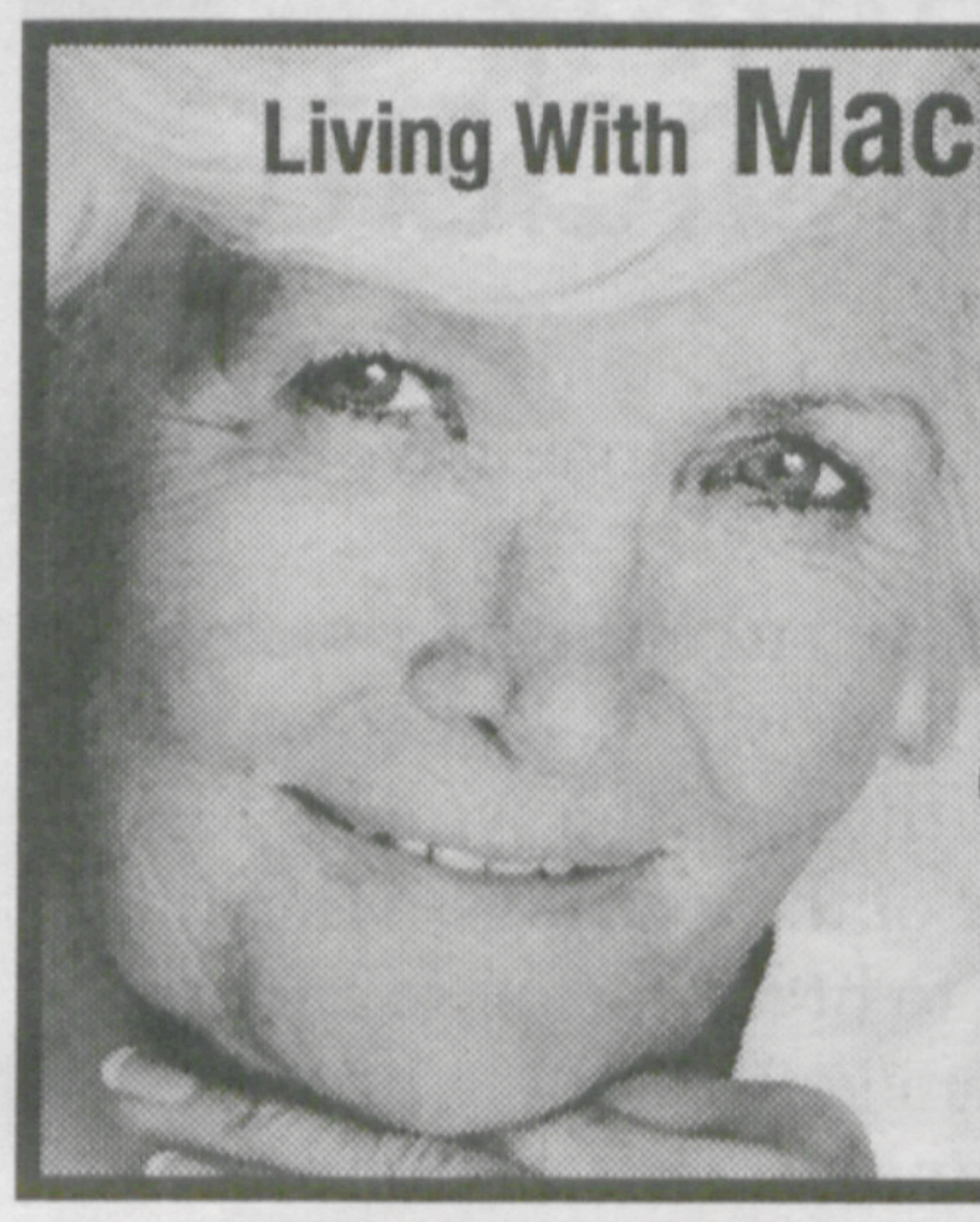

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Pittston Adopts LGBT Inclusive Nondiscrimination Law

Pittston City Council unanimously adopted a non-discrimination ordinance inclusive of protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Local organizers have worked on the ordinance with the council members since March 2013.

Pittston has become the 31st municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to adopt a non-discrimination ordinance. The small city of about 8,000 is the first in Luzerne County and second in northeastern Pennsylvania to adopt this type of local law. Over two dozen community supporters of the ordinance attended the final vote this evening. Advocates present included members of the NEPA Rainbow Alliance board and PSEC.

Without an inclusive statewide non-discrimination law, Pennsylvanians who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), or those perceived as LGBT, can be legally discriminated against. Countless LGBT Pennsylvanians have been fired, evicted from their home, or denied a public accommodation on this basis.

Pittston's State Representative, Rep. Mike Carroll, is a co-sponsor of HB 300 – the state's leading non-discrimination legislation.

Currently 32% of Pennsylvania's population (4.1 million residents) lives in the 31 municipalities with inclusive nondiscrimination laws.

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Central PA Native Zack Ford Pushes The Envelope

By Pittsburgh Lesbian Correspondents

Zack Ford

Pittsburgh Lesbian Correspondents produces an occasional series that poses questions to LGBT folks and allies. This profile by Sue Kerr is on Harrisburg native Zack Ford, who is LGBT Editor, ThinkProgress.org

Zack is someone I met online before we met in real life at a conference. He's from Harrisburg so we occasionally chatted PA issues. Zack introduced me to Think Progress which is now a must-read site for me. I was intrigued when he mentioned smoking as a thing-to-change; I filled him in on the smoking ban and we chatted about the real barrier smoking creates in building community as well as the harm that has on everyone beyond our lungs. It is an interesting and too-little discussed concern. Just the sort of examination of progress we ought to think about more often, right?

Tell us about the very first LGBTQ person you met and what that meant for you.

I had a few family members who identified as LGBT, but I was not very close with them, geographically or otherwise. When I arrived at college, there were a ton of people my age who had already figured out their identities and were out and proud, and that had a huge impact on my own journey.

How do you stay informed on issues?

I read a ton of content everyday. I've found many blogs and outlets that I read daily, and I also have Google alerts to find stories that I might otherwise miss. I try to be really attentive about finding stories on trans issues since they often don't receive consistent coverage on the most prominent LGBT blogs.

What is the most important issue facing the community today?

I think bullying is the most important issue, especially because of conservatives' many attempts to help protect bullies and maintain ignorance about LGBT people. In that way, it actually intersects with all the other issues (marriage, employment discrimination, etc.). The great thing is that education is the key, and helping all young people better understand what it means to be gay, or bi, or trans, or queer, or whatever will help reduce stigma for generations to come.

If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing in Pittsburgh's LGBTQ community, what would it be?

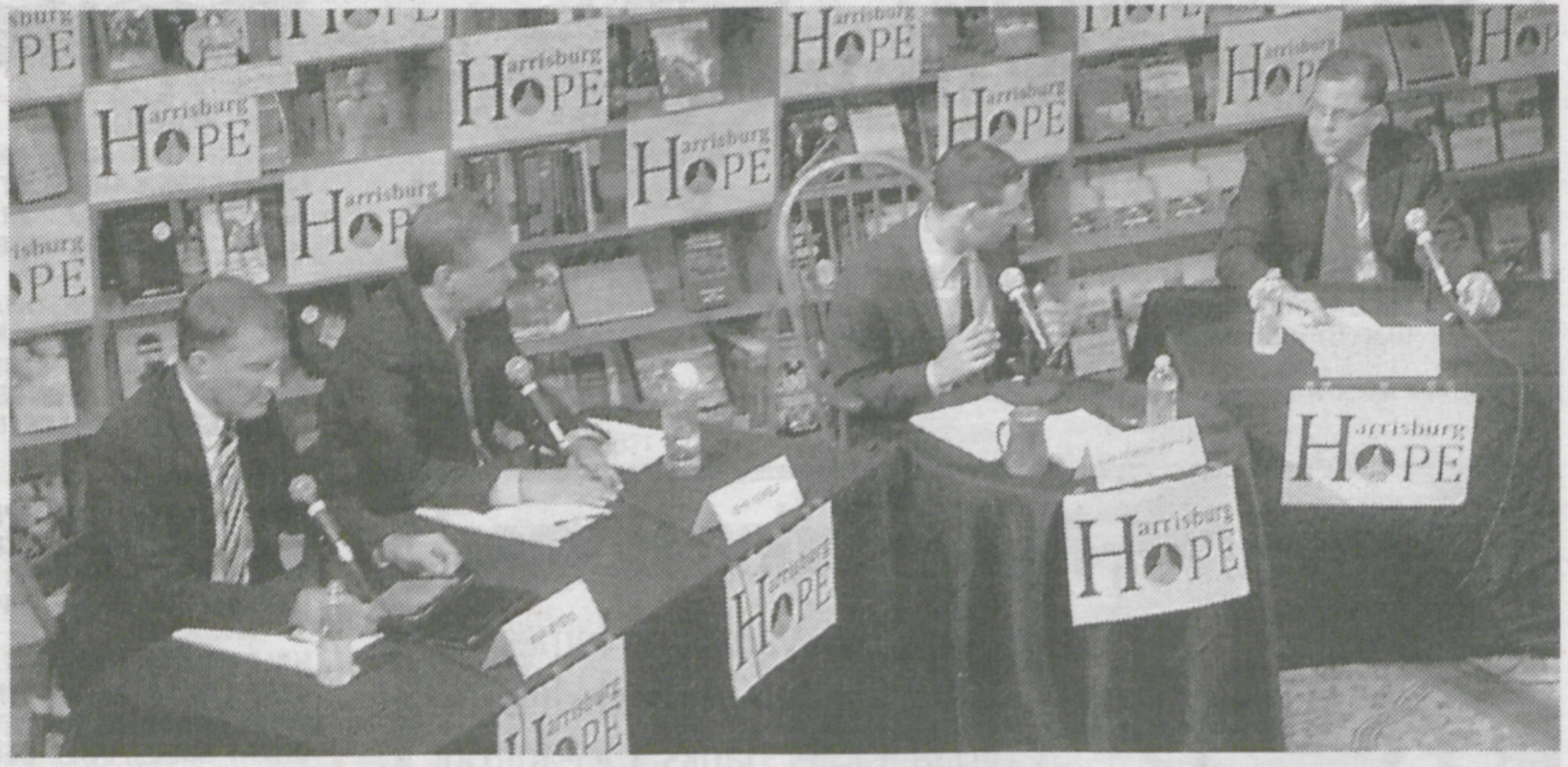
I'm not a Pittsburgh resident, so I can't speak to that directly, but as a Pennsylvania native, I hate that smoking is still allowed in bars. Because of targeted marketing by tobacco companies, gay people smoke cigarettes at rates high above the national average, and that makes going out a much less pleasant experience.

What is one simple thing a reader can do to support the community?

Just don't be afraid to talk about sexuality and gender. The progress that we've made has resulted not just from people coming out of the closet, but from the issues themselves being more accessible. Every opportunity people have to think about the lives of queer people brings them closer to a point of acceptance and respect.

HRC Urges LDS Church to Support Non-Discrimination

Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin has called on Utah lawmakers and leaders within the Church of Latter-day Saints to support federal workplace protections that would ensure no American could be fired simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Griffin made the remarks in Salt Lake City: "Despite the recent setback in the push for a statewide nondiscrimination law, we have a real chance to make progress at the federal level. HRC is leading an aggressive new campaign for a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)—a law that would finally bring workplace protections to this state and to every other state in the country. Here in Utah, the LDS Church has a powerful voice in this debate. But after supporting a non-discrimination ordinance in Salt Lake City, the Church has gone silent on sharing those protections with everyone else. That's wrong, and I know I'm not alone in that belief."



Left to right: Myers, Hangar, Alan Kennedy-Shaffer, Koplinski.

And They're Off! Harrisburg Hope Hosts Gubernatorial Candidate

By Frank Pizzoli

In the first debate of Democratic gubernatorial candidates who will face a Primary Election May 2014 followed by the General Election November that year, gubernatorial candidates Minister Max Myers (formerly Republican and recently a Democrat), of Mechanicsburg, and former Department of Environmental Protection Secretary John Hangar (Democrat), along with Lieutenant Governor candidate and current Harrisburg City Council member Brad Koplinksi (Democrat) were hosted June 5 by Harrisburg Hope at Harrisburg's Midtown Scholar Bookstore.

The evening's biggest challenge was the score card on who would actually attend.

U. S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz and former state Revenue Secretary Tom Wolf both declined, but asked to be kept in the loop on future debates. Former state Revenue Secretary Tom Wolf and state Sen. Mike Stack both confirmed, then backed out within a week of the debate, citing scheduling conflicts. Lieutenant Gov. Jim Cawley sent his regrets. Gov. Tom Corbett did not respond to the invitation.

Eric Papenfuse, Midtown Scholar Bookstore owner and Democratic candidate for Harrisburg Mayor opened the event. State Rep. Patty Kim, who was to deliver opening remarks, arrived late. She was late due to representing her Harrisburg-based district in a late-running session of the House of Representatives.

Using the time to elicit feedback on two of her legislative intiatives, Kim asked panelists if they support her recently introduced expungement bill (HB 908). All do.

Last April Kim co-chaired public hearings on automatic expungement measures H.B. 908 and H.B. 909. The first allows for clearing a criminal record after seven years has lapsed from the completion of a sentence and if certain criteria are met, such as requiring an individual seeking to appear before a judge to make the request.

The second, related measure requires automatic expungement of individuals' criminal record for non-convictions or in cases in which the charges have been dismissed.

"My bills are targeting non-violent offenders and those who had charges never fully processed through the system," Kim said at the time of the hearings. "The intent of these bills is to break the cycle and prevent people from going back to prison."

The Sentinel/CumberlanlLink.com cast the event accordingly: "What is billed as the first candidates' forum of Pennsylvania's 2014 gubernatorial campaign may turn out to be the smallest." Daily News Political Columnist John Baer titled his column "A not-so-great Democratic debate," noting the low candidate attendance. The Patriot News asked in a headline: What if they threw a debate and nobody came?

Although not many invited candidates showed up, the same was not true of interested citizens. The discussion was conducted in earnest.

The 150 people who attended reflected a mix of regulars often seen at HH's community panels and quite a few new faces. Faced with never-ending nightmare of fiscal woes, completed with a conveyor belt jammed with plans that drop off into nowhere, citizens affirmed their continuing interest, even on a summer night when a burger and a beer called.

The panels' hallmark quality is that attendees ask questions after Shaffer asks an opening round. Coordinated by an all-volunteer, non-profit group, the popular speak-fests are regularly covered by PCN and the region's major media outlets.

If there was a theme to the discussion, it was reflected in the use of the term "no brainer" several times, in reference to the candidates' description of Gov. Corbett's refusal of Medicaid expansion, $1 billion in education cuts, and a 'no tax' stand on fracking.

Even though candidate attendance may have been low, citizen interest remained high. That's a positive sign in a city that is debt-weary and subjected to continuous 'over-promising' by this, that, and the other plan pitched as the Kingdom Come.

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February 8, 2014 | 1:00pm

PRINCE IGOR (BORODIN)
March 1, 2014 | 12:00pm

WERTHER (MASSENET)
March 15, 2014 | 1:00pm

LA BOHÈME (PUCCINI)
April 5, 2014 | 1:00pm

COSÌ FAN TUTTE (MOZART)
April 26, 2014 | 1:00pm

CENERENTOLA (ROSSINI)
May 10, 2014 | 1:00pm

The Metropolitan Opera HD LIVE

CAROLINA CHOCOLATE DROPS

Friday, August 16, 2013 | 8:00pm

JOSH RITTER

Saturday, September 28, 2013 | 8:00pm

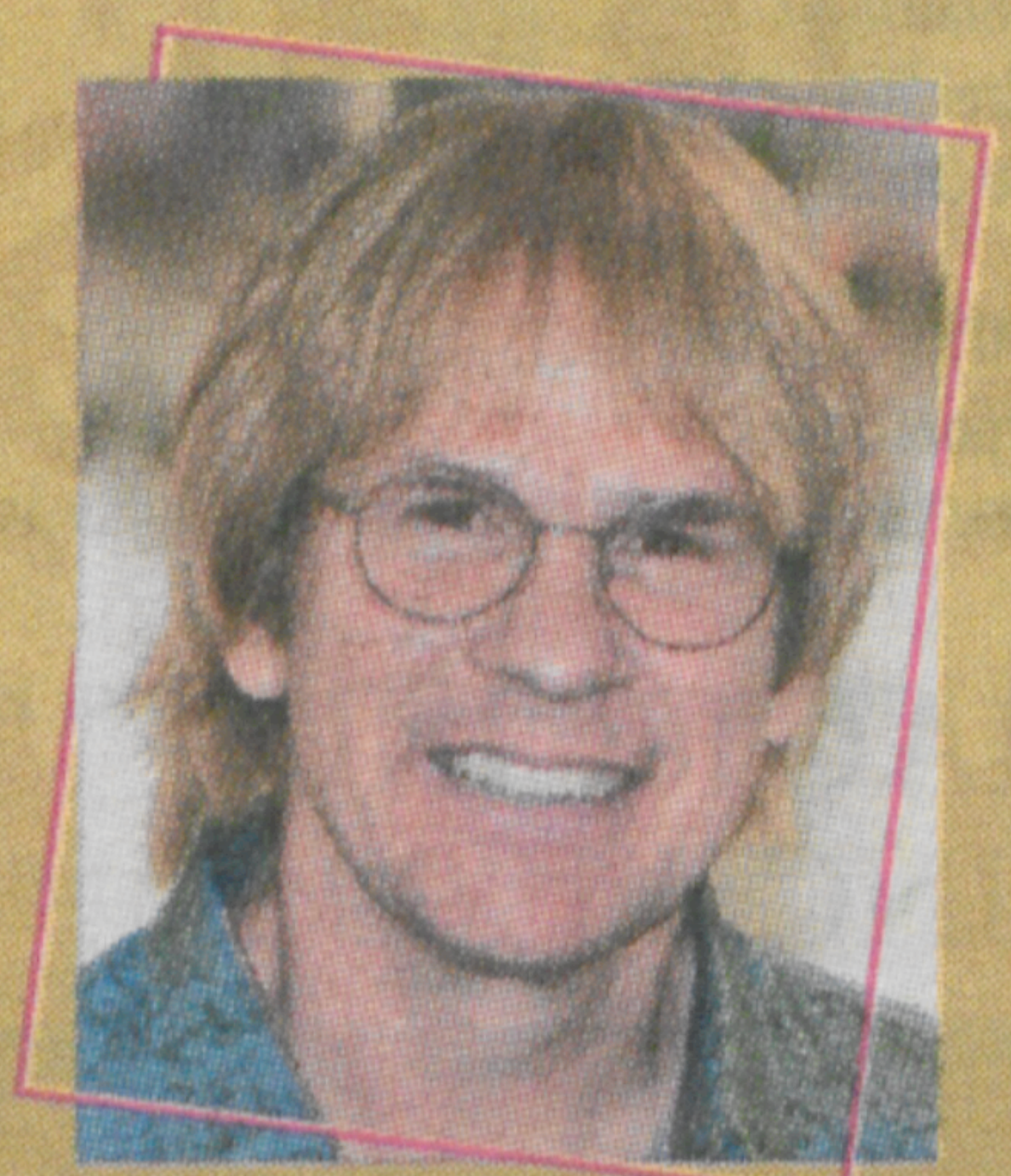
VOICEPLAY

Saturday, October 26, 2013 | 8:00pm

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS

A JOHN DENVER TRIBUTE

Friday, December 6, 2013 | 7:30pm



VON TRAPP MUSIC PRESENTS

THE SOUND OF CHRISTMAS

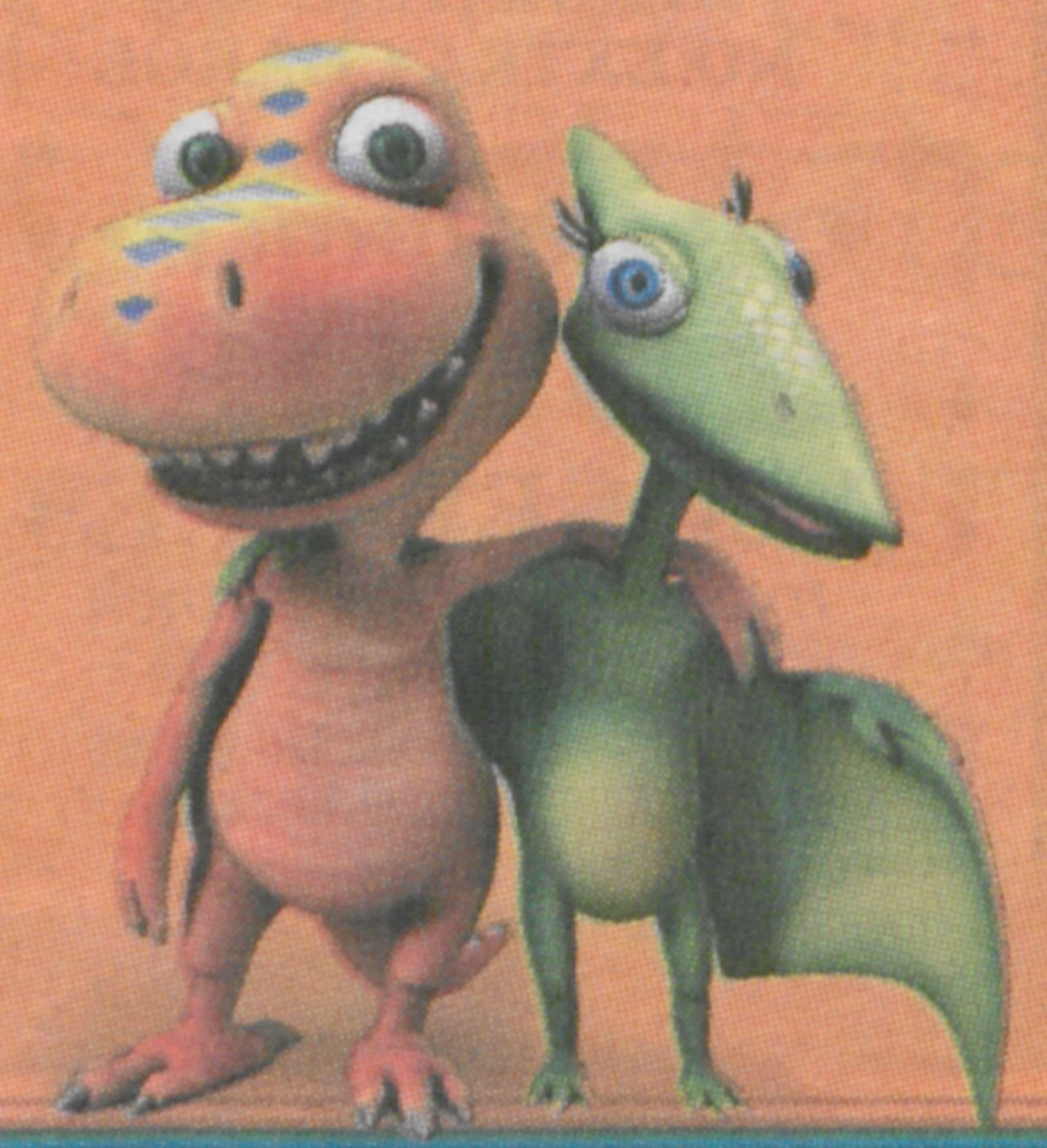
STARRING ELISABETH VON TRAPP WITH THE CAROLIAN BRASS

Sunday, December 15, 2013
3:00pm

AS SEEN ON PBS KIDS TV

DINOSAUR TRAIN LIVE!

Thursday, January 23, 2014 | 6:30pm



SUMMER OF LOVE

VALENTINE'S DAY CONCERT

Friday, February 14, 2014 | 7:30pm

THE CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES IN

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR BASEMENT

ALL NEW NATIONAL TOUR

Thursday, March 13, 2014 | 2:00pm & 7:30pm

ST. PATRICK'S DAY SHOW

CELTIC NIGHTS

THE EMIGRANTS BRIDGE

Sunday, March 16, 2014
3:00pm

AS SEEN ON PBS KIDS TV

SID THE SCIENCE KID LIVE!

Wednesday, April 9, 2014 | 6:30pm

MIXED UP FILES OF

MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER

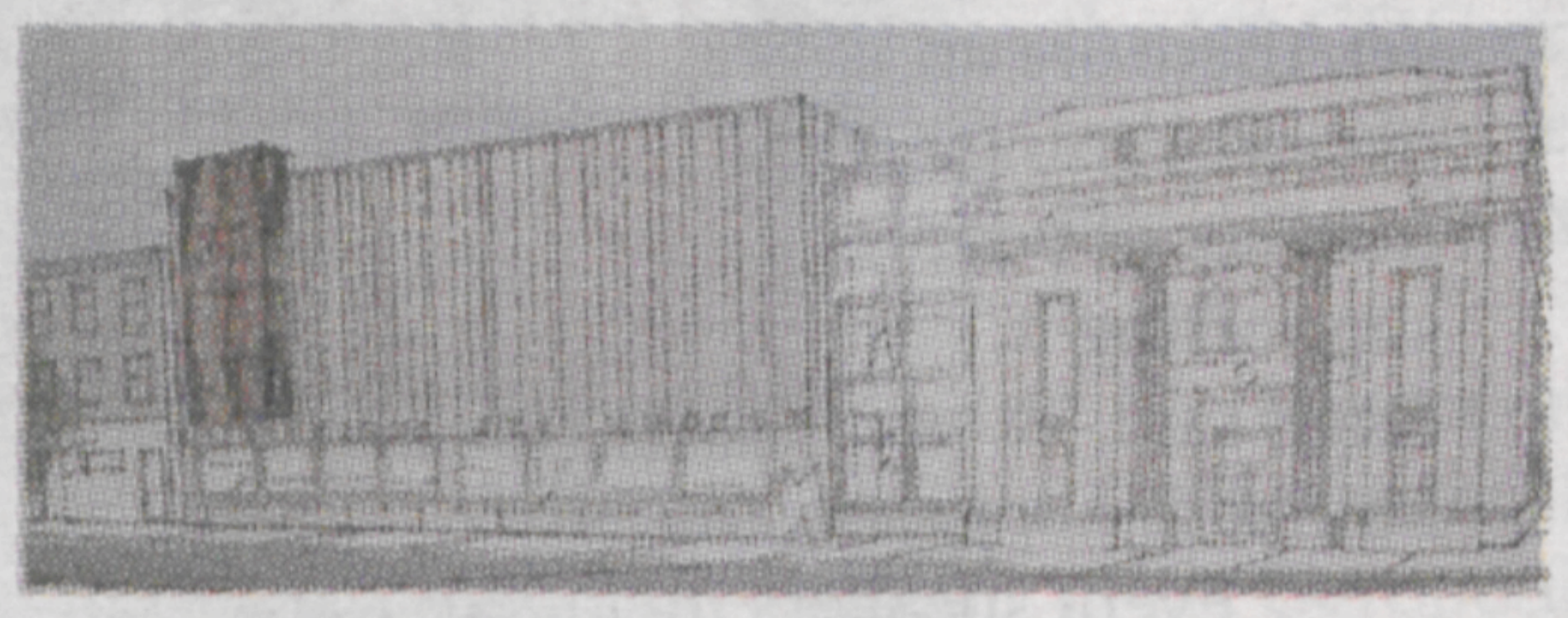
Wednesday, May 7, 2014 | 10:00am & 1:00pm

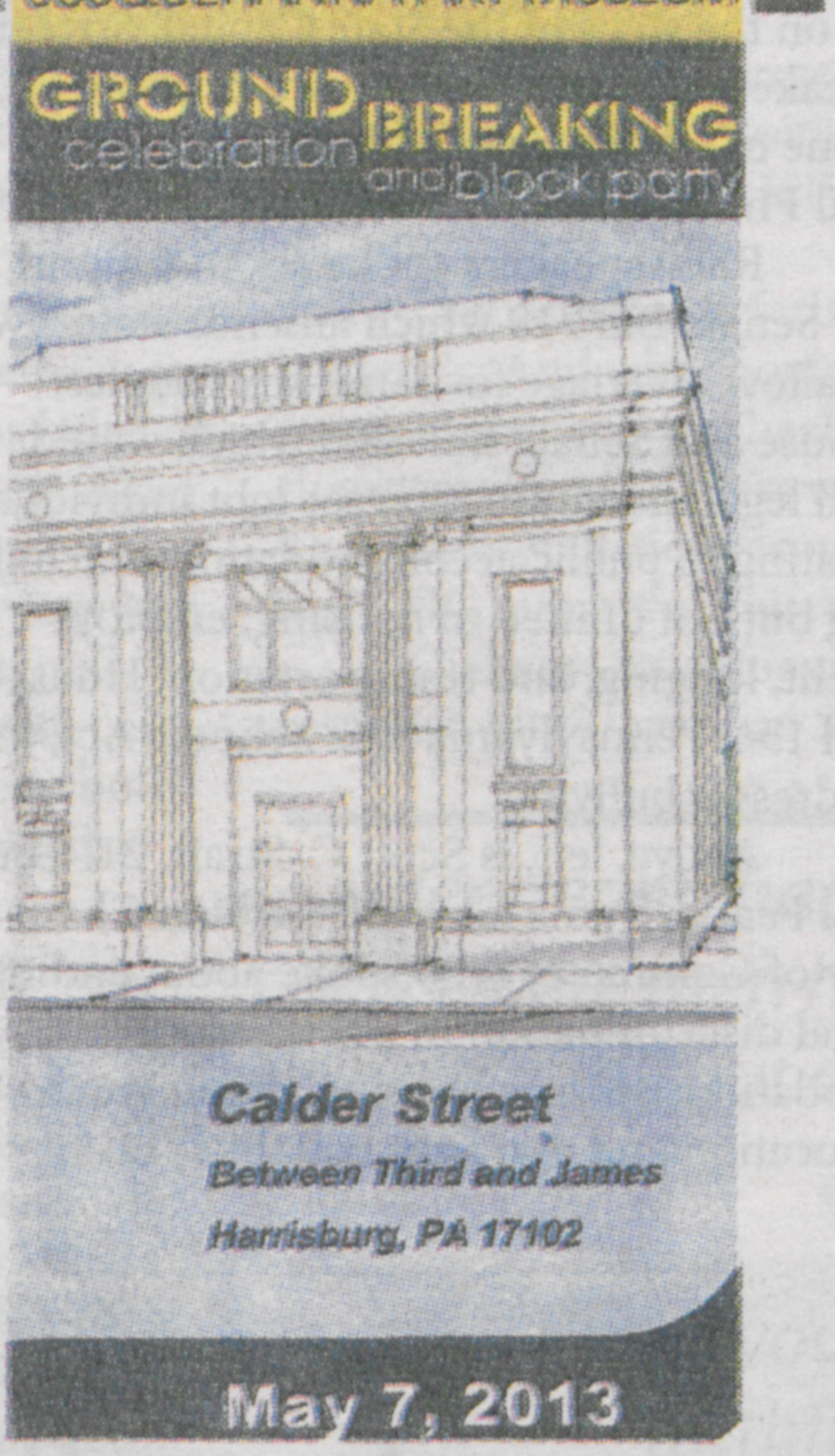
SPECIAL MOTHER'S DAY CONCERT

JUDY COLLINS

Sunday, May 11, 2014 | 3:00pm

Susquehanna Art Museum Breaks Ground





CELEBRATE THE FUTURE OF
SUSQUEHANNA ART MUSEUM

GROUND BREAKING
celebration and block party

Calder Street
Between Third and James
Harrisburg, PA 17102

May 7, 2013

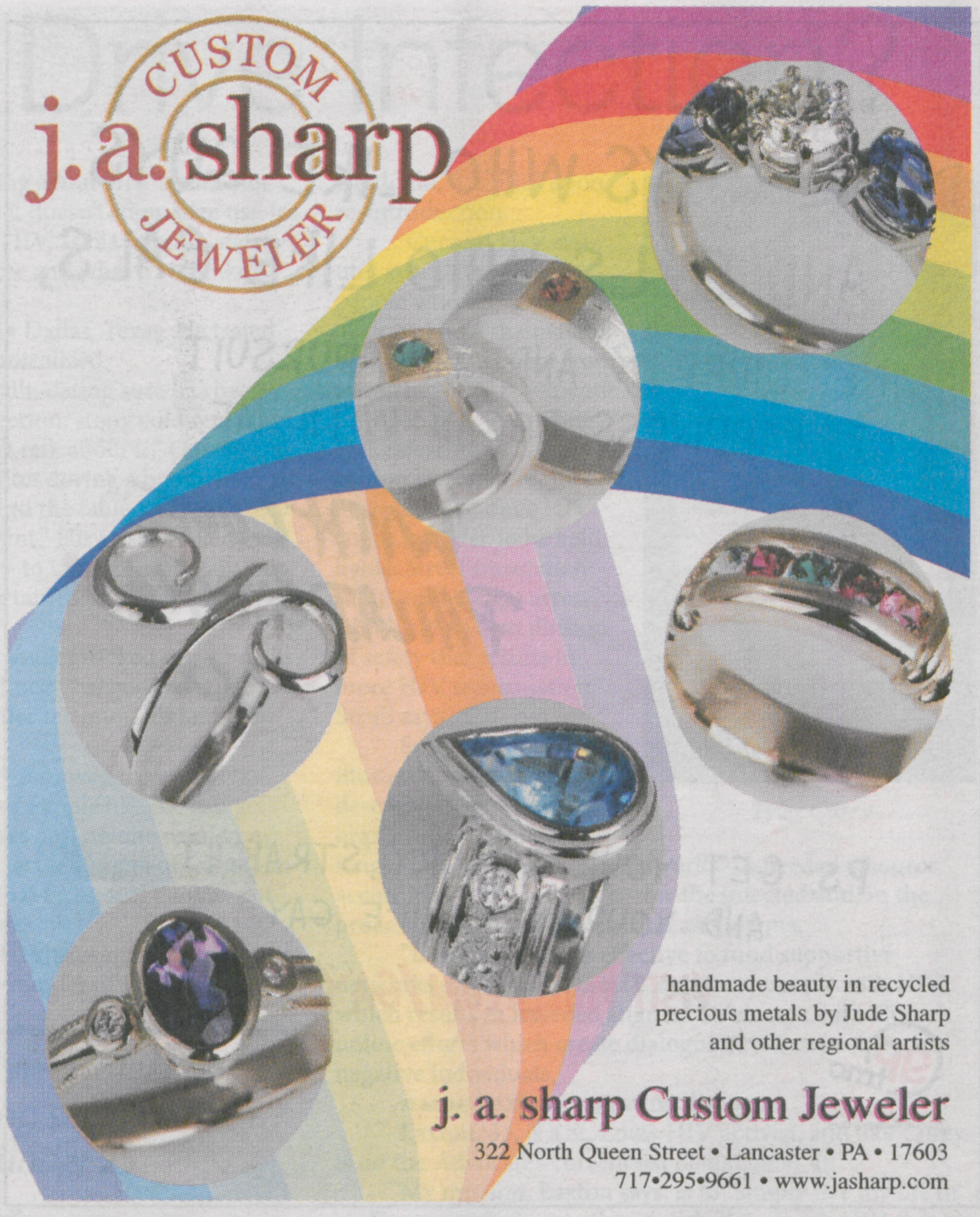
Dignitaries broke ground May 7 for Harrisburg's Susquehanna Art Museum, corner of Third and Calder Streets in the historic Keystone Trust Building. Dampened by downpours, the ceremony nonetheless took place in spite of obstacles and reflected the vigor and enthusiasm the museum's board of directors has demonstrated throughout the $12 million venue's development.

First French Wedding

VIVE
LES MARIÉS!
ALL OUT

After months of protests, the French city of Montpellier witnessed history when its mayor officiated the nation's first same-sex wedding in front of hundreds of guests. Vincent Autin and Bruno Boileau exchanged vows at a ceremony in the southern city, watched by some 500 guests seated on brightly colored chairs. Autin, 40, is the head of the region's Lesbian and Gay Pride association, and he says his wedding to Boileau, 30, marks a big step forward for same-sex equality. "When French children are born into this world, they are born with the same rights as everyone else -- but from the moment you said you were a homosexual, society deprived you of some of those rights," Autin told CNN in the couple's only interview on their wedding day.

Holding an All Out sign, Autin and Boileau noted that more than 320,000 people signed thaqt effort's petition urging the French government to pass the marriage bill as part of a 6 month long campaign All Out ran to pass this bill along side our coalition partners.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Saturday, July 20 - 7:30 pm
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TIME CALL...

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Last Date?
No Date?

Date
Do
Dump
Me

HARRISBURG MIDTOWN ARTS CENTER
268 Herr Street • Harrisburg

DEAR GUYS WHO LIKE GUYS
AND GALS WHO LIKE GALS,

LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT
OF HAPPINESS BEGAN WITH ME.

WITH LOVE,
PHILADELPHIA
XOXO

P.S. GET YOUR HISTORY STRAIGHT
AND YOUR NIGHTLIFE GAY.

VISITPHILLY.COM/GAY

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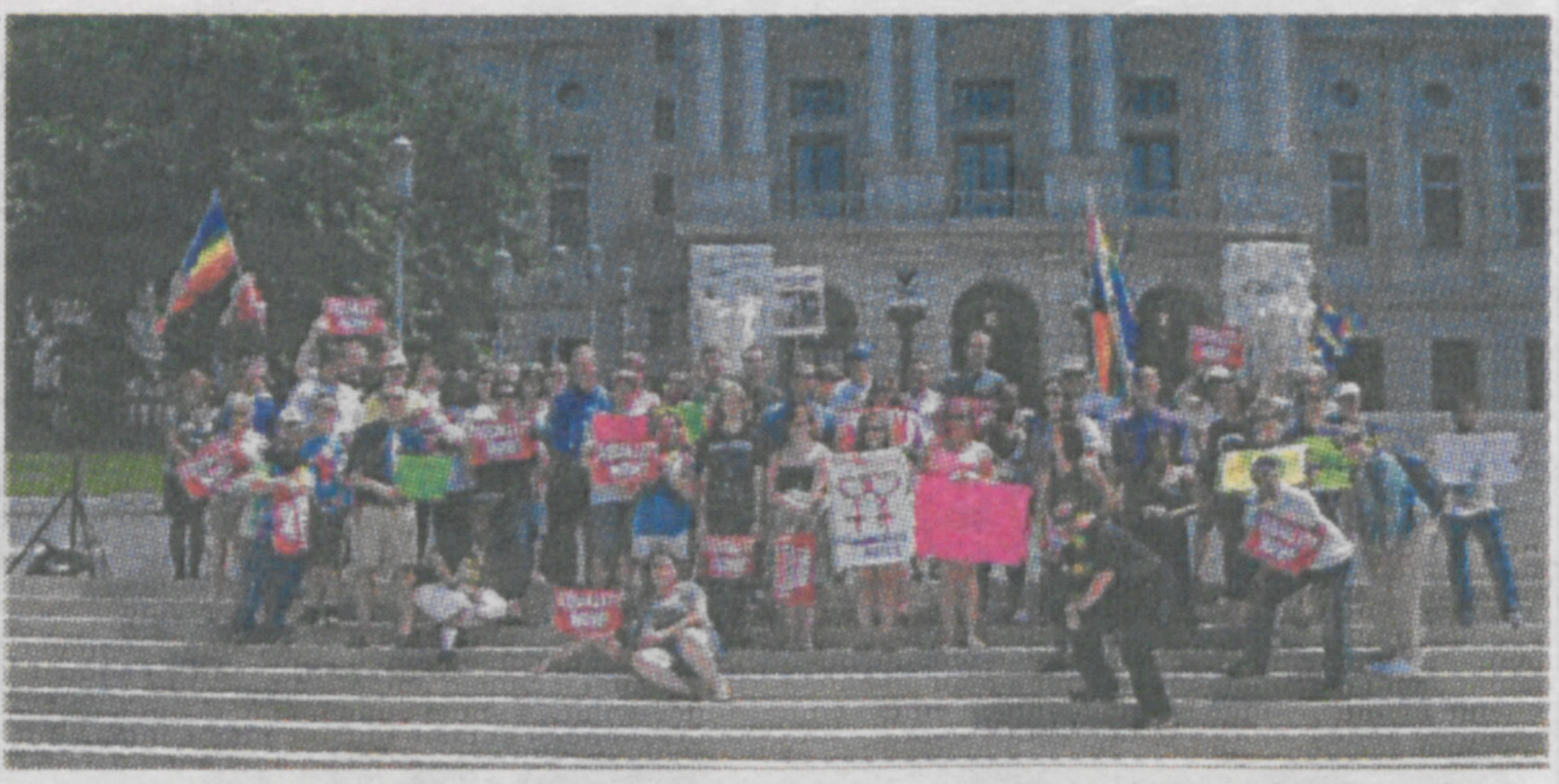
Tourism Marketing Corp



Central Voice Photos

Rally for Equality Supports LGBT Legislation

A "Rally for Equality" took place June 23 on the steps of the State Capital. Sixteen speakers addressed the crowd of about 75, some of whom traveled from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Rally speakers spoke about support for Senate Bill 719 which amends state law to allow marriage for same-sex couples; House and Senate Bills 300 which would end legal discrimination for lgbt individuals relating to public accommodations, including but not limited to housing, employment, lodging, and transportation; House Bill 156, Pennsylvania Safe Schools Act, that addresses bullying.

Above, left, is Scott C. Strait, 21, Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce who spoke about ending legal discrimination in public accommodations such as housing, employment, education and marriage equality. "Even if gay marriage is not achieved yet, there are an overwhelming number of people supporting it," Strait said. "It's bound to happen eventually."

EQUALITY
NOW!
People for the American Way

Event speakers included: Katie Summers, David E. Moore, Joshua Szczesny, Joshua Kratz, of ME4PA; Wendy Forbes, Janice Rael, Summit Co-Founders; Deb McClain, Capital Region Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce; Rev. Jeffery Jordan, MCC; Holly Alden, LGBTQ at MLUC; Brian Green, Safe Guards; Ted Martin, Equality PA; John Hanger, Democrat gubernatorial candidate; Andy Hoover, ACLU; Dan Miller, Harrisburg City Controller; Jason Goodman, PSEC; and state Representative Brian Sims.

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Does HIV Stigma Drive Infection?

By Frank Pizzoli

In 2012, Alder Health Services had 21 new infections identified through their HIV testing program.

All 21 were men having sex with men. "All but one was under the age of 25. The remaining infection was over age 50," reports Phil Goropoulos, CEO, Alder Health Services, based in Harrisburg and Lancaster. He rates the community's HIV awareness as "medium to low".

Phil Goropoulos

The agency's 2012 "sero-positive rate" was over 2%. That means after administering 790+ HIV tests they found 21 positive test results. "This is significantly higher than the 1% CDC expects to find at public testing sites like Alder Health," he notes.

Stigma around the disease doesn't help.

Goropoulos believes that "to some extent Alder Health's strong commitment to people living with HIV results in stigma". The agency also offers LGBT-sensitive primary health care in Harrisburg and Lancaster. Services are available to both HIV-infected, non-infected, and any person who needs primary health care on a sliding scale basis.

Unfortunately, here in the region, and nationwide, there is a split within the gay male community. It goes like this: A gay organization not directly involved with HIV services perceives that HIV service organizations are a threat to their donor base, their funding. "There's enough money for HIV," can be heard in the conversation. What's unfortunate, and shortsighted, is that HIV negative people get infected, not those already infected. The absence of any meaningful dialogue between non-infected and infected guys only serves to increase infections.

"There's hesitancy by individuals to get involved in our programs that have nothing do with HIV, even programs that promote health in general, or to be a patient in our primary medical care services for lgbt individuals or anyone who needs care," Goropoulos says. Some people are afraid to volunteer, "fearing involvement is a signal they may be infected."

Early in the epidemic, gay men volunteered at AIDS service organizations like Alder Health and produced amazing results. "Then for years, we had great difficulty getting men involved with us, especially after the gay community mistakenly began to feel that HIV was no longer their issue," Goropoulos says.

Alarmist view or reality?

In accepting a GLAAD Media Award for "How to Survive a Plague," activist Peter Staley said, "Gay men are only about 2% of the U.S. population, but we're the fastest growing group of new infections, 63% of total infections in recent years. Why aren't these numbers shocking us?"

Recently released update figures from The Centers for Disease Control indicate the rate of diagnosis continues to increase within men who have sex with men (MSM) with a 11% rise in diagnoses from 2009 to 2011, resulting in a estimated 30,573 MSM being diagnosed with HIV in 2011 (up from 27,545 in 2009). This is in marked contrast to heterosexual diagnoses (for both males and females), with a 2.5% decrease in infections. Since Staley made his remarks, this new data, for 2011, shows that MSM as a percentage of new cases increased from 63% to 65%.

University of Pittsburgh research Ronald Stall says if current trends continue 50% of African-American men who turned 18 in 2009 and have sex with men will be HIV+ by age 35. Fifty-four percent of all men who have sex with men will be HIV-positive.

Nationwide, Needle Prick Project founder Tyler Curry wants "to get people talking about HIV again. Not just gossiping but honest talk that doesn't stigmatize us." It's a "modern conversation" about HIV, as his mission states, "what it means to be HIV positive and what it will take to protect each other today."

Curry, 29 years old, lives in Dallas, Texas. He tested HIV positive in 2012 and was radicalized.

"Since my positive test result, dating sure has been interesting. I've faced lots of rejection, stony cold receptions from others. All because we can't talk about it," Curry says.

"After I forced a conversation during a buddy brunch, I learned that half the guys around the table were infected. Yet there we sat all that time. Silent." His posse dished everything - politics, sex, religion – to the dirtiest detail "but we never discussed HIV as it pertained to our everyday lives," Curry said.

Curry's online project - www.getpricked.org – breaks the silence between positive and negative guys by allowing real guys with real HIV to offer testimonials and their photos.

"My generation feels safely removed from the HIV epidemic. And why shouldn't we? People like me can go on treatment and live healthy lives and no one would be the wiser. That is, unless we all start talking to one another. Then these statistics become actual faces, real people, not just CDC numbers," Curry stresses.

Dialogue must focus on "HIV prevention as a shared responsibility," says Sean Strub, founder of POZ magazine and more recently The Sero Project.

Alder Health had 21 new infections… all 21 were men having sex with men… all but one under 25.

◆◆◆

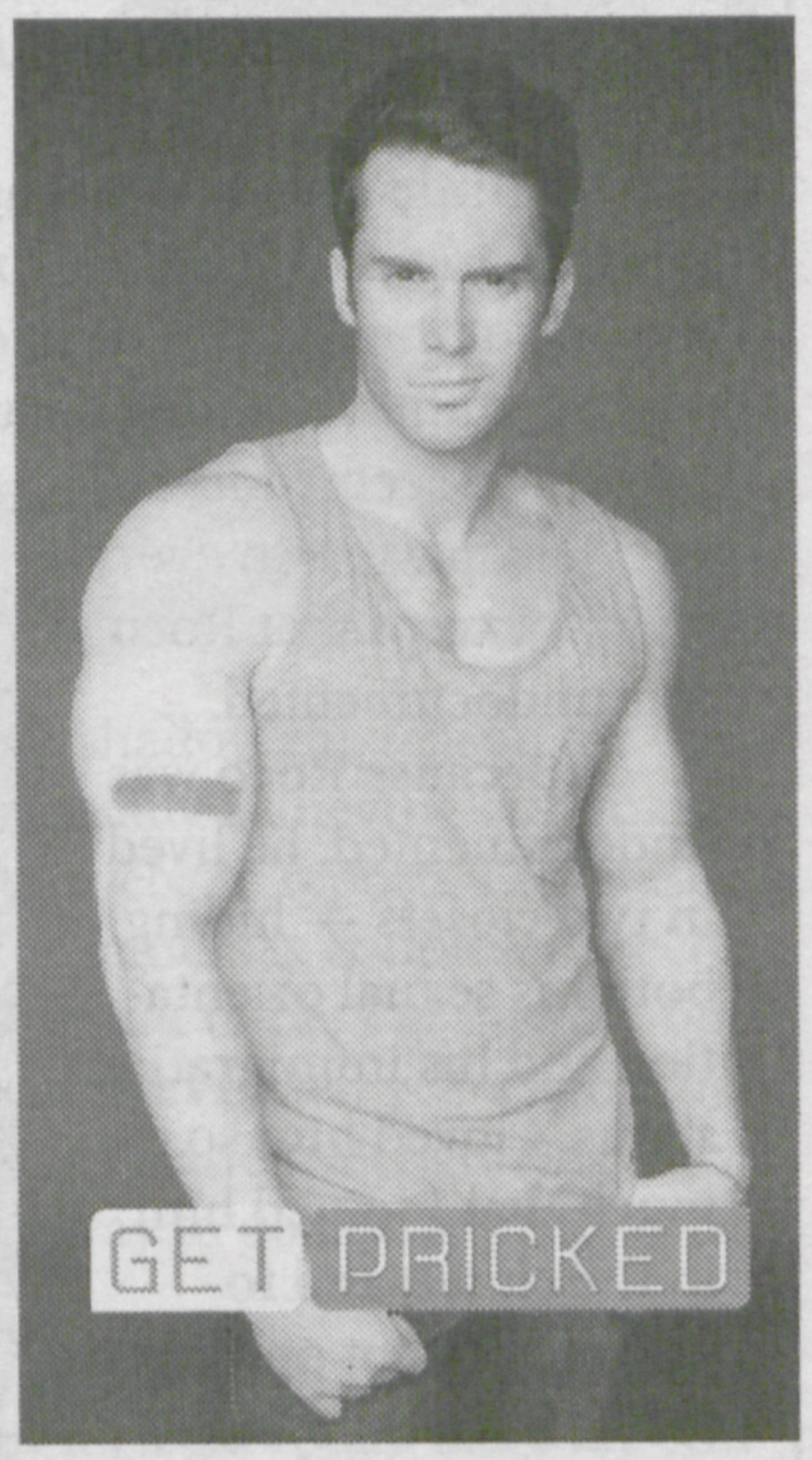
"Know your status and be truthful about it."

HIV criminalization laws block shared responsibility, fuel stigma, and may result in more infections.

To ease stigma and bring laws into line with current science, US Congresswoman Barbara Lee has re-introduced the "Repeal Act," which asks state attorneys general, state public health officials, people living with HIV, legal advocacy and service organizations to review laws, policies and cases that impose criminal liability on people living with HIV.

"These laws are based on bias, not science. These laws breed fear, discrimination, distrust, and hatred, and we've got to modernize them. That's exactly what this legislation would do," Lee said upon re-introduction.

Aaron Laxton



Tyler Curry

Current HIV statutes send "a message to people who are negative or don't know their status that protecting them from acquiring HIV is someone else's job," Strub explains. He's referring to criminalization laws that require knowledge of one's HIV status in order to be held liable. Street translation: "don't test, escape arrest" which creates "an illusion of safety that results in more HIV transmission," Strub says.

Sustaining the illusion of safety is the de-emphasis by service organizations which no longer provide supportive networks – a needed resource according to AFC research - for the infected and, in the process, thwart misinformation and stigma.

"It would be more effective to fund supportive networks of people with HIV, empower people with HIV, which results in lessened stigma," Strub says. Like Curry's online efforts which create dialogue between positive and negative individuals.

Aaron Laxton is creating dialogue.

Laxton, 33, is a St. Louis HIV activist, and like Curry is on the Advocate's current list of 40 Under 40.

My mission, Laxton says, is to "simply live my life in such a way that shows other people living with HIV that it is possible to be happy and healthy and HIV positive."

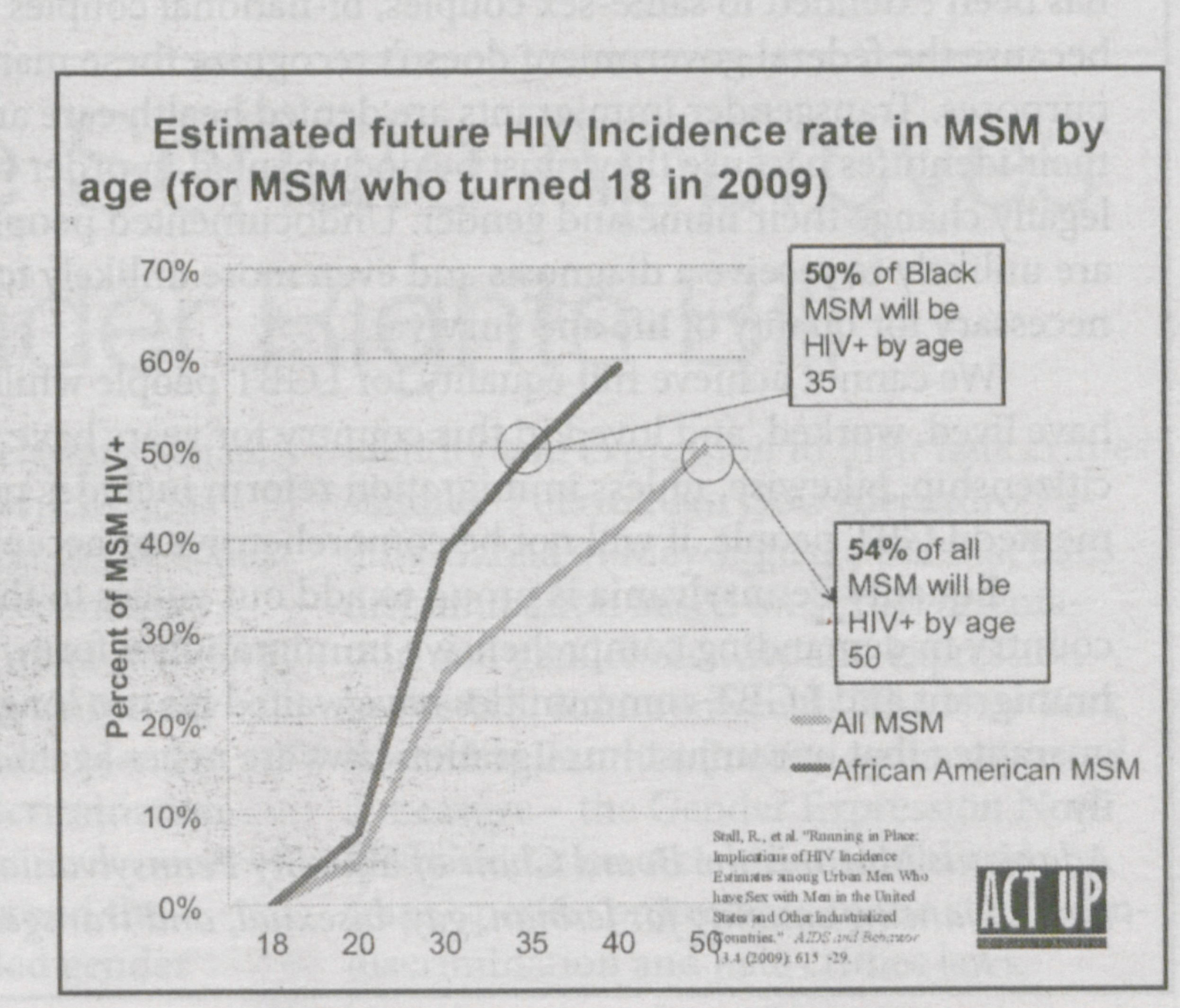
Laxton underscores a generational shift.

"People are forgetting about the plague era, the pain, loss and destruction that AIDS left behind in the gay community. People no longer think that HIV is a problem. We have been told that we can take medications and that will keep us healthy. No one tells you, however, that the newest class of medications to treat HIV cost over $3,000 a month," he points out.

To bring back dialogue and awareness Laxton started on day four of his diagnosis to chart his journey. Viewers can see the results at http://www.youtube.com/laxtona

On HIV prevention and other messages, Laxton observes that "as a community we are desensitized. We're told that we should be concerned about everything and in turn that makes it hard to be concerned with anything. I think that it is very telling of where we are in the fight to end HIV/AIDS."

As one online guy wrote in an email for this article: "Know your status and be truthful about it. Being HIV-positive is fine but needs to be communicated."



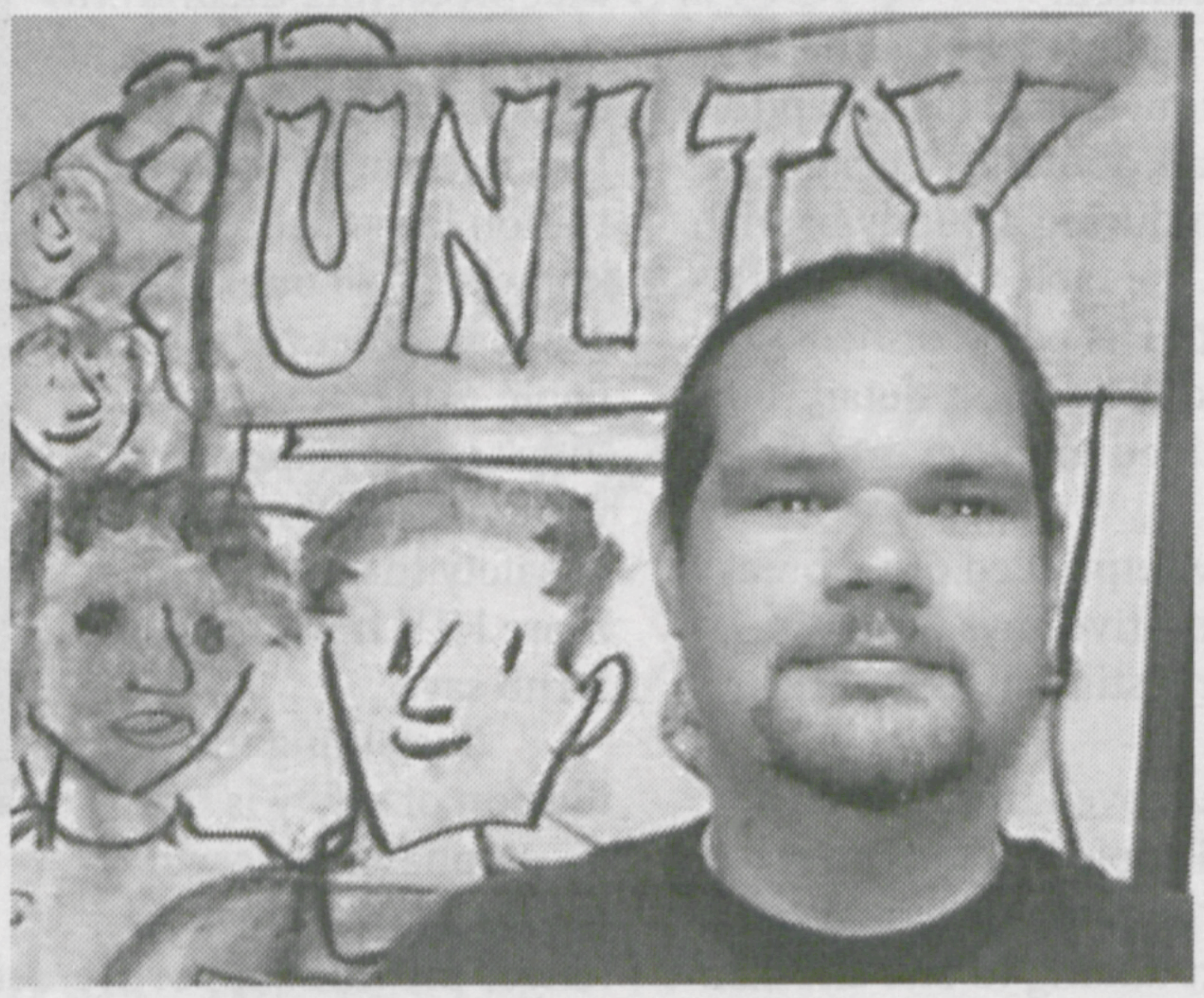
Stall, R., et al. "Running in Place: Implications of HIV Incidence Estimates among Urban Men Who have Sex with Men in the United States and Other Industrialized Countries." *AIDS and Behavior* 13.4 (2009): 615 -29.

Immigration Made Real

By Adanjesus Marin
Equality Pennsylvania, Board Chair

A little over 14 years ago, I met and fell in love with Roco. He was handsome, kind, caring, and hardworking. He was a pastry chef, and every day he would bring me one of the pastries he had made that morning.

It didn't take long for us to fall in love, and soon we moved in together. Our relationship seemed like a fairytale, perfect in every way — except that Roco was undocumented.


Adanjesus Mari

Because Roco was undocumented, he lived in two closets — hiding both his sexual orientation and his immigration status. I loved him so much that I joined him in the closet, and together, we kept our love a secret from everyone.

For years, we had to keep our window shades always drawn, ever vigilant that no one discover our relationship.
If the secret got out, we faced more than the all-too-common threats of homophobia. Being discovered could have meant deportation for Roco, should someone decide to report him as undocumented.

If Roco and I had been straight couple, the solution would have been relatively simple. We were madly in love and would have gladly married — announcing our love to the world and securing documentation that would have allowed Roco to stay in the US no matter what. But this option wasn't possible for us as the laws of our state and country didn't recognize our commitment.

I wish that the old saying, "love conquers all," was always true, but our reality was different. After three years, living in secret became more than our love could handle. We ended our relationship, and I became determined to do whatever I could to prevent anyone else from suffering like we had.

Today, more than 14 years later, little has changed. Immigration reform has been debated many times over those years, but bi-national same-sex couples continue to struggle. Of the 11 million immigrants living in this country, millions are living in a double closet like Roco — hiding their sexual orientation and documentation status.

That's why Equality Pennsylvania, the commonwealth's leading LGBT advocacy organization, voted unanimously to add our voices to the broad movement seeking comprehensive immigration reform in accord with the principles adopted by the Fair Immigration Reform Movement.

Since our decision, we've often been asked why we decided to get involved in immigration. Our reason is simple: it's the right thing to do. As we seek justice and fairness for LGBT Pennsylvanians, we cannot leave behind LGBT immigrants.

It is impossible to address issues like non-discrimination, access to healthcare, or marriage equality without also addressing our country's current unjust immigration system.

The simple truth is: until we win comprehensive immigration reform, many of our victories will remain only partially realized. Even in the states where marriage has been extended to same-sex couples, bi-national couples are being torn apart because the federal government doesn't recognize these marriages for immigration purposes. Transgender immigrants are denied health care and legal recognition of their identities because they must be documented in order to obtain insurance or legally change their name and gender. Undocumented people living with HIV/AIDS are unlikely to receive a diagnosis and even more unlikely to receive the medicines necessary for quality of life and survival.

We cannot achieve full equality for LGBT people while millions of us who have lived, worked, and loved in this country for years have no fair and swift path to citizenship. Likewise, unless immigration reform includes protections for undocumented LGBT people, it will not be comprehensive or acceptable.

Equality Pennsylvania is proud to add our voices to the millions across this country in demanding comprehensive immigration reform. Those of us in both the immigrant and LGBT communities have waited far too long for justice; it's time to guarantee that our unjust immigration laws are never again able to tear apart a family.

Adanjesus Marin is the Board Chair of Equality Pennsylvania, a statewide organization advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Pennsylvanians.

noah's ark veterinary center

By Dr. Jose Venereo

My name is Spike

My name is Spike; I am an 8 year old bulldog. Three years ago, I had a lump growing on the side of my neck. Fortunately, my parents take me to my veterinarian once a year for a wellness check-up.

My vet did the "check-up" and recommended that the lump be removed and sent to a laboratory to be biopsied. My parents decided to have the lump removed and it was sent for biopsy. When the report came from the lab it said that the lump was cancerous but had been fully removed during the surgery and it was very unlikely that it would return. Because of early intervention, I am still around, healthy, and will be getting spoiled for the rest of my life.

If your pet does not have a yearly wellness exam, it may result in missing potentially preventable and curable conditions that your pet may be developing over time. Evaluation by your veterinarian, at least once a year, may prove beneficial to your special friend. Although yearly immunizations are important, the greatest benefit of a yearly exam is early detection and prevention of diseases.

Dogs and cats age approximately 5-7 times faster than humans. As our fluffy friends mature, their bodies undergo many changes. Some of these changes might be related to aging, exposure to infectious diseases, obesity, weight loss, etc. Many times pet owners don't detect these changes, because they tend to be subtle or assumed normal for the pet.

Based on the wellness exam, your veterinarian should be able to offer recommendations for maintaining or improving your pet's health. He/She may offer nutritional advice, recommend dental care, or screening tests for your pet. Working together with your veterinarian, with yearly check-ups, you may be able to offer a long and healthy life to your pet.

Healthy Pet Hint: Don't give your pet over the counter medications without first consulting with your veterinarian. What is safe for humans is not necessarily safe for our pets.

Noah's Ark Veterinary Center, 6325 Chelton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17112, (717)652-5923

Art Association of Harrisburg Hosts Summer Soirees

The Art Association of Harrisburg presents five Soirees at patrons' homes, all featuring eclectic artwork by AAH artists, lovely hors d'oeurves, beverages, and live music. All Soirees are Saturday evenings, 5-8p.m. Reservations are $40 in advance, 45 at the door. All proceeds benefit the Association's cultural programs.

"Tourette," a handsome Norman Revival home in Bellevue Park, served as the first site, June 15, hosted by Donna and David Dwyer. The house at 2301 Bellevue Road was built by L.B.Nye between 1931 and 1936 to mimick a small French chateau, complete with an entry through a two-storey tower. Featured artists were Joseph Vene, Kimberly Plank, Sharon Jones, Stephen Wetzel, John Holtzman, Tanade Suveepattananont, and Jonathan Frazier.

Nathan Hench, Ron Wetzel and David Volkman will co-host the second Soiree on July 13 at the Hench home at 1104 Green Street, Harrisburg, with most of the activity taking place in the garden owned by Charles Puguese and David Hoffman at 228 Herr Street. The Hench home is one of a five-unit Mediterranean-style row home, designed by Harrisburg's prominent architect Charles Howard Lloyd, with an interior contemporary ambiance. The garden is in a beautiful French style. Featured artists will include Paul Flury, Paul Gallo, Mark Allison and Keith Leitner, with architectural images, landscapes, and abstracts.

Mark Allison and Erin Mengel will host the next Soiree Aug. 3 at their home at 535 Harding Street in New Cumberland, a traditional 1940's brick house with an eclectic modern interior and a charming patio and garden. Artists will be oil painters Kelly McGee and Julie Ober, and photographer Lori Snyder, with images of trees, suburbia and landscapes.

Bob Lomison's and Tanade Suveepattananont's 1960-era contemporary home at 96 Carol Street, New Cumberland, will be the site for the Aug. 10 Soiree, with varied works by seven artists on view in the tennis court area and by the pool. Artists will be Tanade Suveepattananont, Martin Velez, Joseph Dudding, Jack Kemp, Carrie Wissler-Thomas, Chelsea Caroline, and Kristen Kest, with styles ranging from figurative works and portraits, to landscapes, abstracts and Pop Art. Music by Jonathan Frazier.

Finishing the series is "A Picnic in Tuscany" hosted by Tracey Meloni on August 24 at her home at 1623 Berkshire Lane, Harrisburg. Tracey Meloni's lovely Tuscan-villa-like house and garden will be graced by Jeff Wiles' photography, Bryan Molloy's Boston Impressionist oil paintings, Michael Peluso's hand-blown glass, and Barbara Gutekunst's handmade jewelry. Jazz by Katie Rudolph and Jim Miller, along with Italian hors d'oeurves, Bellinis and wines will complete the ambiance.

Info: www.artassocofhbg.com; 717-236-1432

Social Security Administration Adjusts Gender Change Policy

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has changed its policy to better protect the privacy of transgender people.

The SSA has made it clearer and easier for transgender people to update the gender designation in Social Security records. The SSA joins other federal agencies like the U.S. State Department and the Veterans Health Administration in recognizing the realities of transgender lives and replacing outdated policies.

"Most people may not see this as a big deal, but transgender people know that this seemingly small technical change will protect their privacy and give them more control over their own lives" said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality and originally from Harrisburg.

Mara Keisling, National Center for Transgender Equality, originally from Harrisburg

In light of the updated policy, NCTE has a released a guide to understanding the modernized policy called Transgender People and the Social Security Administration. The new resource answers commonly asked questions about the updated policy. It also provides step-by-step information for how account holders can change the gender designation in their Social Security record.

The new policy allows transgender people to change the gender designation on their Social Security Records by submitting either government-issued documentation reflecting a change, or certification from a physician confirming that they have had appropriate clinical treatment for gender transition. This policy replaces SSA's outdated policy, which required documentation of specific surgeries. The U.S. Military are the last remaining federal agencies to rely on these outdated requirements to change gender designations. Old policies remain for the military's pension and other records systems, forcing veterans and retirees to meet extremely burdensome and unreasonable requirements.

NCTE Director of Policy Harper Jean Tobin said, "The new policy gets rid of old, arbitrary requirements for specific medical where people had to submit proof of specific medical treatments to update SSA records, even though these may not be available or appropriate for every person. The SSA's revised policy makes it is one of the last remaining major federal agency policies to drop these outdated requirements."

"Prior to this policy update, trans people risked being unsafely outed to front line Social Security staff as well as to any number of other bureaucrats and people they interacted with in their daily lives," said Tobin.

Keisling added, "Importantly, Social Security records are gateways to so many other kinds of identity documents, from driver's licenses to employment records, all of us depend on it in one way or another. This seemingly minor technical improvement touches every aspect of our lives and will have a profound impact on changing the way transgender people live and work."

NCTE worked for seven years in collaboration with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Lesbian Rights. We will continue working to ensure that transgender people have access to identity records and documents that match their gender identity.

Transgender Professionals Form Association

The Association of Transgender Professionals (ATP) is now open for business and endorsed by a national advisory board of voluntary leaders and allies, according to ATP Executive Director, Denise Norris.

The association primarily serves people who have, had or will have non-conforming gender expressions/identities and seek to advance their professional careers. The group encourages networking and mentoring which strengthens careers and promotes the next generation of leaders.

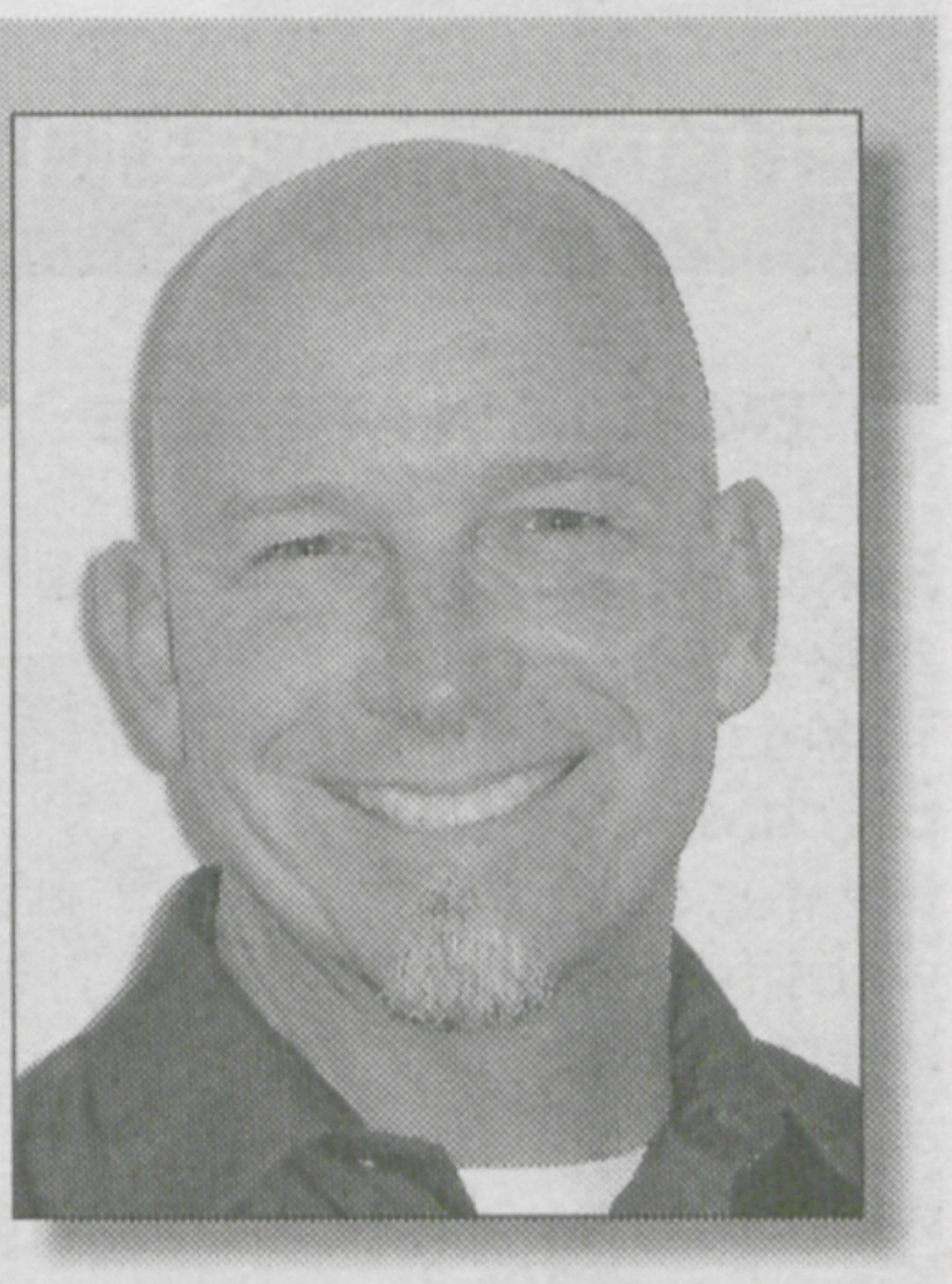
With respect to gender expression diversity, Norris points out that everyone has a gender expression: "It is the sum of all the gender attributes one presents to the world. It is seen in our mannerisms, our clothing, our partners, our careers and especially our bodies. However, when gender expression is unclear, or when there are conflicting attributes, one's gender expression becomes non-conforming in the mind of the observer. When the non-conforming aspects of gender expression approach the extreme level found in many transgender people, it can lead to harassment, abuse, discrimination and even violence upon that person."

Norris says, "ATP's vision is to create inclusion for Gender Expression for all employees. Our belief is that in the setting of the workplace it should not matter why or how an employee expresses their gender. What ultimately matters is that the employee can fulfill the duties of the job for which they were hired."

Info: www.transgenderprofessionals.org

making sense of life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen



Are We Ready for Equality?

The GLBTQ community has been fighting for our rights for a long, long time. The problem is that we can get so used to fighting we don't know what else to do. Like many other situations in our lives, fighting for a cause can overshadow the reason for the cause. In other words, it becomes more about the fight than actually achieving our goals.

At the time of this writing the Human Rights Campaign website reports 13 states in our country authorize same-sex marriage, recognize rights for same-sex couples, or recognize some rights for same-sex couples. Far cry from where we want to be, I grant you, but a huge step from where we were fifty years ago, or for that matter, even ten years ago. The other side of the coin is that far too many states have enacted legislation recognizing only heterosexual unions as "real" marriage. So, yes, we still have a way to go and a lot of work to do. Part of that entails the continued fight for our rights.

But what happens after we are granted the rights we deserve? Then what? Interracial couples had to fight for their right to marry and although it's legal today there are still plenty of people in this country who don't approve of it. What's a couple in that situation supposed to do? Continue to fight the naysayers until everyone approves?

The fact of the matter is that seldom, if ever, are we going to find that everyone, everywhere, approves completely of everything we think, say or do. I didn't approve, sanction or encourage my father to drive at the age of 93. But, as he was wont to point out on many occasions, if the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gave him a license to drive then it was none of my business. I have my own views about the efficacy of PennDOT regulations, but its decision to renew dad's driver's license did not require me to be in the car when he was driving. Acceptance, with a good dose of tolerance, allowed me to keep my mouth shut until he (thankfully!) gave up his car on his own.

Nothing I could have said to him would have gotten him to stop driving. I would suggest that nothing we can say and no law that we can pass is going to get everyone in this country to agree that two men or two women should be allowed the right to marry. What is important is that we do everything possible to secure those human rights for marriage equality and then, when they are granted, take advantage of the opportunity if we desire to couple.

Fighting for rights is a lot like complaining. If we aren't careful we can get used to it. Chronic complaining leads to stress-related physical conditions that can rob us of our quality of life, or even life itself. Hatred, anger and vengeance are often byproducts of fighting for causes. This is primarily because we can easily get caught up in fighting against something instead of fight for something.

Instead of fighting against people who disapprove or do not understand the romantic love two women or two men can have for one another, let's fight for marriage equality. Instead of fighting against discrimination, let's fight for understanding. Instead of fighting for our rights, let's fight for the ability to seize the rights that are already ours.

We need to explore the concept that at some point we will be able to stop fighting. What then? There is an old saying in Sicily that a man will grieve more for the death of his enemy than the death of his loved ones. The belief is that having someone to hate, or fight with, is as important as having someone to love. It's an odd concept to me, but I wonder just how many times we have looked for the fight instead of the resolution.

I'm not saying to "give up the fight." I'm saying we must be willing to fight for something, instead of against anything. And, more importantly, make plans for "after the fight." That time will come. When it does we must be able to enjoy the fruits of our labors in joy, happiness and love.

Dr. Terry is a licensed social worker in private practice and the founder of Center for Spiritual Living Cumberland Valley. He can be reached at: terry@newthoughtpa.org

Delaware Senate Approves Transgender Rights Bill

By an 11-7 vote, the Delaware Senate has approved Senate Bill 97 whichs adds gender identity and expression to the state's anti-discrimination and hate crimes laws. Sixteen states and D.C. have trans-inclusive anti-discrimination laws. The University of Delaware has also added gender identity and expression to its anti-discrimination policies.

Thirteen of those states and the nation's capital have also added gender identity and expression to their hate crimes statutes. Puerto Rico Gov. Alejandro Padilla García in May signed a bill that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in the U.S. commonwealth. The New York Assembly last month once again approved a measure – the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act – that would add trans-specific protections to the state's non-discrimination and hate crimes laws.

arts & entertainment

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Tickets: 717-214-ARTS (2787)

thinking out loud

By Abby Dees

It's Time for BSA To Take a Tip from Its Own Handbook

Straightening Up At The Boy Scouts Of America

Sometime in the '20s my grandfather became the then-youngest Boy Scout to obtain the top rank of Eagle Scout. When he died he was as proud of that as he was of piloting ships into Tokyo Bay at the end of the war. He was a classic Scout too. The epitome of honor and resourcefulness, he whistled while he worked and did everything he could think of to make life better for the people in his world.

I never talked about the gay scouting ban with my grandfather. Maybe I didn't give the 97-year-old guy enough credit, but I thought that conversation would be too awkward. I'd have to explain things that we just didn't talk about together, like the difference between plain old sex and sexual orientation. And I worried he'd think I was criticizing him personally, so I cut us both some slack. You get to do that with family sometimes.

I'm not cutting the Boy Scouts of America (or "BSA") any slack right now, though. They have announced a proposed policy change: The BSA might admit gay Scouts – but definitely not gay leaders.

So why even try? The stated basis for the ban has always been that homosexuality violates the Scout's oath to be "morally straight." Here's what they mean by that: "[Y]our relationships with others should be honest and open. You should respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your speech and actions, and remain faithful in your religious beliefs. (from the Boy Scout Oath and Law).

In other words, being gay is inconsistent with these characteristics. I'm not sure if it's the honest and open part or the faith part, or whatever. I'm not privy to the bizarre conversation that must repeatedly transpire among BSA leadership every time they review and reaffirm the ban, but it's clear to me that the new policy proposal in no way seeks to challenge the idea that gay people, by definition, cannot be "morally straight."

But wait, there's more! They've also stated, "We allow youth to live as children and enjoy Scouting and its diversity without immersing them in the politics of the day … The Boy Scouts of America has always reflected the expectations that Scouting families have had for the organization. We do not believe that homosexuals provide a role model consistent with these expectations."

Nonetheless, the BSA may feel comfortable now allowing gay boys to join their ranks even though they have officially labeled gays unworthy of admiration. This is no compromise, but a twisted update on "don't ask don't tell," and children will pay the price for adult cowardice. I can't think of a worse way of virtually dunking kids into "the politics of the day" than forcing them to parse this hypocrisy.

Imagine what this might feel like to a gay Scout. He's allowed to join, presumably because he can't help himself, poor thing. But the BSA can still provide a bulwark that keeps other, still-unsullied straight boys from looking up to a gay Scout leader and getting ideas. He'd learn that people like him, once they grow up, can't be trusted to behave. What a thing to look forward to.

Where in this is the idea of strength and honesty that is all over the Boy Scout Handbook? I get that the BSA is a private organization and free to set its policy, but that doesn't stop me from calling them out for causing harm to young people. With the mission of building character and honesty in our next generation of men, they are instead teaching that self-respect and respect for others is too fragile to withstand human difference and variety. (Interestingly, some individual chapters flout the ignorant directives from above and are thriving, of course.)

This isn't my grandfather's Boy Scouts. He would have struggled to understand what it meant to be gay and probably gotten it wrong in parts, but he would have measured the man, or the boy, by his actions. As a good Scout, he certainly wouldn't have singled anyone out based on archaic stereotypes. BSA, check your own traditions and try again.

Abby is a civil rights attorney-turned-author who has been in the LGBT rights trenches for 25+ years.

Birth Announcement

Adam Randall Firestone and Luke Emel are pleased to announce the birth of their son Brydon Julio Atir Emel-Firestone. He arrived on May 26, 2013 at 10:44 p.m. He weighed 9 pounds 12 ounces and was 18.5 inches long. We want to thank all of our friends who walked this part of our journey with us and look forward to many more memorable times to come.

First Hispanic & Openly Lesbian Federal Judge Confirmed in PA

By Victoria, Keystone Student Voice

Nitza I. Quiñones Alejandro

Eight months after her nomination, openly lesbian judge, Nitza I. Quiñones Alejandro of Philadelphia has been confirmed as a federal court judge for Eastern Pennsylvania, with the unanimous approval of the United States Senate. She will be the first openly lesbian Hispanic woman to serve in the federal court system, as well as the first Hispanic woman on the Eastern Pennsylvania court.

She was nominated to the position by President Barack Obama, who spoke of her accomplishments at a Pride Month reception held at the White House, saying,

"I want to congratulate Nitza Quiñones Alejandro, who just a few hours ago was confirmed by the Senate, making her the first openly gay Hispanic federal judge in our country's history… good news."

Judge Quiñones Alejandro is the seventh openly LGBT person to be confirmed as a federal judge.

Judge Quiñones Alejandro is a native of Puerto Rico, where she attended college and law school. She moved to Pennsylvania upon her graduation. Her legal career in Philadelphia began in 1975 as an attorney for Community Legal Services, where she helped defend low income residents. She later served as an attorney for the Department of Veterans Affairs and as an advisor for the Department of Health and Human Services. She was appointed in 1991 by then Governor Robert P. Casey to the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, and was the first Hispanic woman to be a judge on the court.

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Improving the Health of LGBT Older Women

By Rebecca Richman
The LGBT Elder Initiative
A Phila-based program

Studies show that LGBT older women are more likely to live alone and be without the support of children and family than non-LGBT older women.

By the year 2050, one person in five will be over age 60. The majority of these people will be women. Among those people who reach 85 years of age, the size of the majority of women will grow even larger. It is important then, when considering women's issues, to specifically include the concerns of older women.

When women grow old, gender discrimination is magnified. In a society that focuses on youth, older women face many different types of discrimination. This discrimination can inhibit women's ability to lead healthy and independent lives in their later years. Older women face discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age – to name a few factors.

LGBT older women experience a unique set of challenges as they age. Studies show that LGBT older women are more likely to live alone and be without the support of children and family than non-LGBT older women. Having lower incomes and living in lower-income areas, they potentially live with fewer resources during a time in their lives when they need them the most. Policy, health care, and societal attitudes toward older women hinder their ability to access aging and health services.

Due to longevity, older women make up the majority of people in long-term care facilities. They make up about 75 percent of nursing home residents and 66 percent of home-care consumers. LGBT older women cite unique issues of concern about long-term care facilities, including the fear of being "out" in a new and potentially "unsafe" setting; the refusal of staff and administrators to recognize same-sex relationships and/or Medical Power of Attorney documents; and neglect by staff.

Women who may have been out for many years sometimes find themselves fearful of disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to staff or fellow

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Q: My parents had heart disease, and very bad teeth – is there a relationship between the two?

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Q: I don't want to have heart disease. Are you saying that if I brush and floss I won't get heart disease?

TdS: No, I am not saying that. What I am saying is that there is a link between the two diseases. The verdict is still out on exactly how they are tied to each other. It's kind of like the chicken and the egg mystery. But let's look at it this way: Why contribute to heart disease if we don't have to?? Brush several times a day. Thoroughly. Get a water pik and use it, every day. Eliminate as much bacteria from getting into your blood stream as possible. See your dentist at least twice a year for regular exams and hygiene appointments. Ask them how good a job you are doing with your home care. Ask them to give you tips on how you can do a better job.

Q: My parents had dentures. I guess after you lose all your teeth, you don't have to worry about all that nasty periodontal bacteria in your bloodstream anymore.

TdS: Guess again. I can't tell you how many folks I see who have dentures or partials who do not know how to properly clean them. As a result, those people still have tons of bacteria coursing through their bloodstream from all the debris and plaque left on those dentures. Even though someone may have full dentures, it is still important for them to come in and see their dentist at least once a year so that we can make sure they are taking good care of their denture and cleaning it well. We also like to do a oral cancer screening at that time and make sure everything looks good. Oral cancers, suspicious lesions may still occur after someone gets dentures. Always better safe than sorry.

Health

continued from page 28

I LOVE HER
We are NEVER GOING AWAY

GETTY IMAGES

residents in their new environment due to the potential for discrimination and harassment. In fact, a report on LGBT Older Adults in Long-Term Care Facilities found that 89 percent of LGBT older adults predicted that staff would discriminate against them due to their sexual orientation.

As more and more lesbian and bisexual women in the U.S. marry and have children, it is key that health facilities recognize these relationships so that their residents are not cut off from the social supports that they have. The impact of loneliness and isolation can lead to higher rates of depression, anxiety, heart disease, and diabetes. To make sure that visitation and medical decision-making rights are honored, up-to-date legal documents are a necessity for all LGBT women.

Research shows that older women in general experience discrimination by care providers. Additionally, older women are not as likely to seek or receive the care that they need. Lesbian and bisexual women receive less routine care than other women. Despite greater risk in old age, physicians do not always refer older women for preventative screenings.

According to the American Cancer Society, women over age 60, the group most at risk for reproductive cancers, are the least likely to have an annual PAP smear. Sometimes, even if a doctor refers them, they do not actually get the needed tests. Reasons for this situation include low rates of health insurance coverage, fear of discrimination, and previous negative experiences with health care providers. The Affordable Care Act may help reduce this problem because it provides for free preventative screenings for many health conditions.

Older women who have experienced discrimination throughout their lifetimes may be even more fearful than others of telling their doctor about their sexual orientation. They may have had negative experiences with doctors in the past, making it more difficult to seek the care they need. Making sure that physicians and care providers in long-term care facilities are educated about the needs of older LGBT women residents could make a vast impact on their overall sense of well-being and wellness. In some places, like New York, the government is finally mandating that care providers be trained so that they are sensitive to the unique needs and issues facing older LGBT people.

Despite research and documentation about the impact of discrimination on older LGBT women's health, most countries, including the U.S., have not yet adopted non-discrimination policies. As the population of older women grows, it is critical that non-discrimination policies recognize sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, as well as age and gender discrimination, as forces that affect the lives of older women globally.

Aging affects everyone in one way or another. If one is lucky, they will get to experience old age with the support of family and friends, and with dignity and equity. And hopefully, when Women's History Month and Older Americans Month are celebrated 50 years from now, one of the achievements recognized will be the improved lives and health of LGBT older women.

About the Author

Rebecca Richman is a member of the LGBT Elder Initiative (LGBTEI) and a paralegal wth the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania. The LGBTEI fosters and advocates for services and resources that are competent, culturally sensitive, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of LGBT older adults. To comment on this article, suggest topics for future articles, or for more information, visit www.lgbtei.org or call 267.546.3448.

DON'T ASK.
JUST
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Ally in the Academy

By Trum Simmons
Harrisburg Area Community College

What's in a name?

What's in a name?

Language is so tricky, or shall we say language is wonderful and tricky at the same time.

Watching a child learning to speak is a great opportunity to see language at work. Parents and grandparents can't wait to hear the baby's first words: "cow," "doggie," "ball," "Mommy," "Daddy." We hear these words and just beam. These first words are pure joy to us as well as to the baby, who is learning about the tremendous power of language.

And what is the baby doing in enunciating her or his first words? Naming, that's what. A child is doing just what Adam did in the Garden of Eden when he named all the animals. Adam later learned two more words that got him and Eve kicked out of the garden: "good," and "evil." Powerful words indeed.

A young school student named Isaak got into a lot of trouble recently when it came time to graduate from an area high school, simply because of his name. Isaak Wolfe wanted to hear his name read at commencement, but Red Lion Area School District officials said he couldn't hear his name because that's not what appears on his school records.

Once again, the daily complexities faced by our transgender sisters and brothers was front and center in the news, this time all over a name.

When it comes to gender and sexuality language becomes increasingly tricky. When Isaak was born he was anatomically female, so his mom and dad named him Sierra. Years later Isaac felt he was a male and began presenting as such. He came up with a name congruent with his gender and began the process of transitioning physically as well.

You might say Isaak was exercising his power to express himself, just as did Adam in Eden. And of course the school district decided to exercise its power as well, saying that since his name on school records is Sierra, that's how he should be recognized at commencement.

Oh, Isaak could now wear the color of gown worn by the boys, they said. Talk about a crazy decision. And while we're at it, what's with the male and female gowns, anyway? Is Red Lion still back in the 1950s somewhere? Are the gowns pink and blue?

In his fine book "Teaching as a Conserving Activity," Neil Postman discussed the need for language education in our schools, and I think Red Lion administrators would do well to read his book. Learning language is " the most intimate, integrated, emotion-laden thing we do," he writes. "To speak new words in new ways is not a cosmetic activity. It is a way of becoming a new person and seeing the world in new ways."

Postman then quotes Bertrand Russell, who said that "language serves not only to express thought but to make possible thoughts which could not exist without it." And this is so apt to the questions Isaak Wolfe and other transgender folks face. It is indeed apt to the issues faced by everyone on the LGBTQ spectrum.

The so-called alphabet soup came about because so many people didn't fit into the neat categories of straight/gay, male/female and so on. What I like to call the queer spectrum is a wide and varied place, as wide and varied as humanity itself. People like Isaak Wolfe are requiring us to see the world in new ways, which is what education is all about.

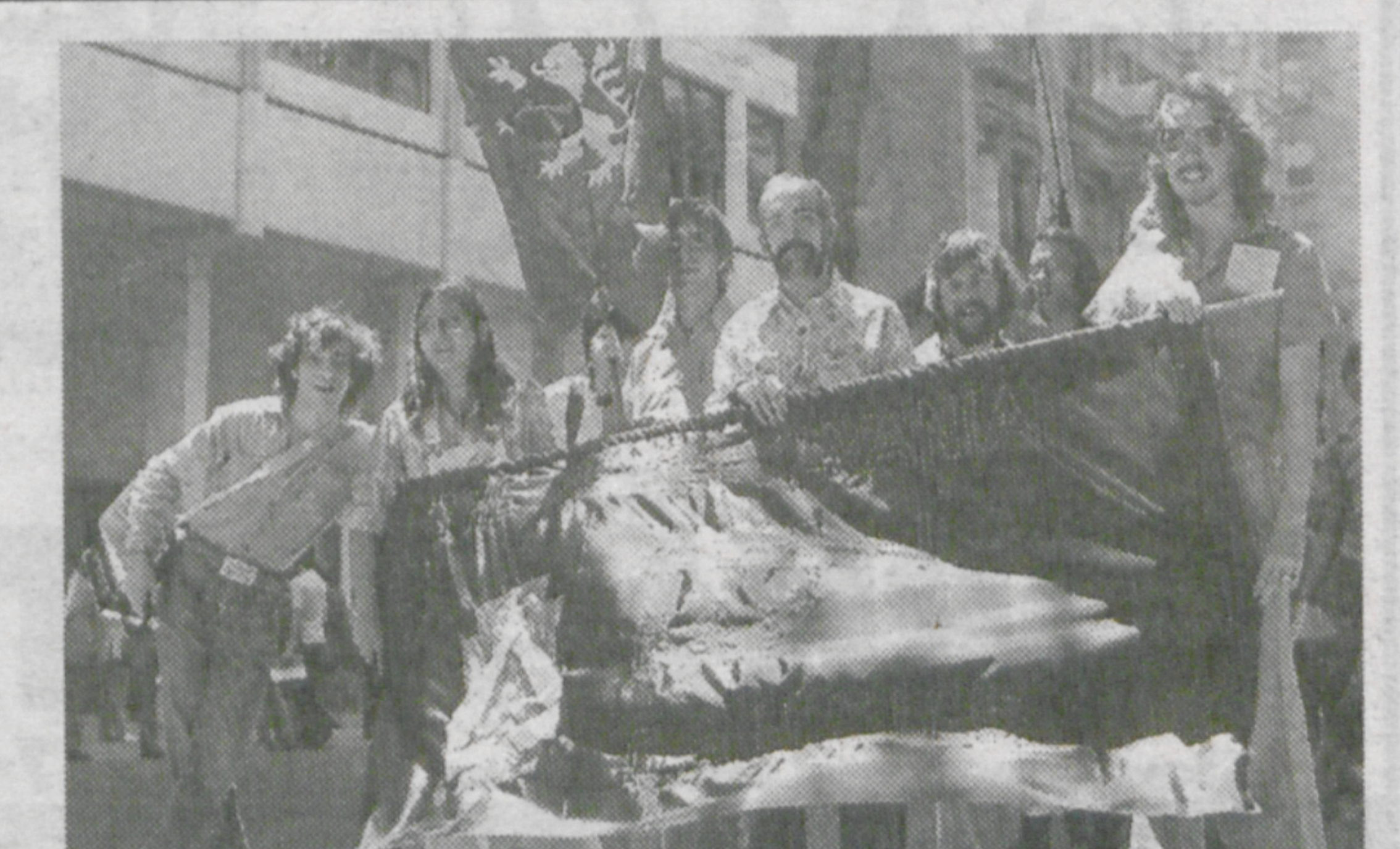
Our world continues to open up and to present new challenges of all kinds. The way to meet these challenges is not to revert to the familiar, to hold onto traditions that do not take into account the new things we are learning. We need to see the world through new eyes and expand our vocabulary, not shut it down.

Back to babies and children learning to speak. How many toddlers have said with great determination, "I'm Bobby," or "I'm Anya." A young mother I know recently said to her 3-year-old, "You're my daughter," who responded by drawing herself up to her full height and announcing, "I'm not your daughter, I'm Luna!"

I say, good for Luna, and good for Isaak Wolfe, don't you?

Trum Simmons is Professor Emeritus of English and Adviser Emeritus, LGBT Allies Group, Harrisburg Area Community College.

History: Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus



Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus members marching in the Philadelphia Gay Pride Parade in June 1975 or 1976.

Photograph by Bari Lee Weaver and made available by Sam Deetz

Creep of the Week: Setting Captives Free

By D'Anne Witkowski

The SCF anti-gay course, called The Door of Hope, is a "60-Day interactive course that will teach you to enjoy a newfound relationship with the Lord and how to find freedom from homosexuality."

There's an app for that. It doesn't even matter what "that" is, because there's an app for everything. You want the photos you take with your $300 phone to look like they were taken with a disposable camera from 1993? There's an app for that. Do you wish you had a talking cat who repeats everything you say? There's an app. You want to find an app that will make your phone emit the sounds of copious flatulence? There are so, so many apps for that.

So it really shouldn't be surprising that there's an app for praying the gay away, which makes the fart apps seem like a good use of your data plan because at least farts have some kind of scientific basis.

Setting Captives Free, "a non-denominational ministry which teaches the biblical principles of freedom in Jesus Christ," is behind the app. They promise they'll help you quit things like drinking, overeating, gambling, and cutting. Which are all noble goals, really, since those are all things that can cause a lot of problems in a person's life.

The problem with Setting Captives Free, however, is that they also provide a course to help you to stop being gay, as if being gay is the same thing as drinking boxed wine alone in your basement or spending your kid's college tuition money at a riverboat casino. It isn't, and claiming otherwise is both insulting and dangerous.

The SCF anti-gay course, called The Door of Hope, is a "60-Day interactive course that will teach you to enjoy a newfound relationship with the Lord and how to find freedom from homosexuality."

Wait a minute, 60 days? That's two whole months! I mean, if you want to quit smoking there's an app that promises you can do it in one hour! So basically, in the time it would take you to quit being gay, you could quit smoking over 1,400 times!

Looking at SCF's other course offerings, it appears that 60 days is their standard. Which is forever! I mean, this is 2013 where everybody carries a mini super computer in their pockets with instant access to all the information in the world at all times. And SCF expects people to wait 60 days for results? How does this app expect to compete with Grindr?

The Door of Hope assures its pupils, "[D]espite what you may have heard elsewhere, you do not have a 'homosexual gene,' nor were you born this way with no hope of freedom. You can be set free from the bondage of homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ and the cross! If you will apply the biblical principles found here, you can walk through the Door of Hope into a new life with Christ, free from sexual impurity and self-gratification."

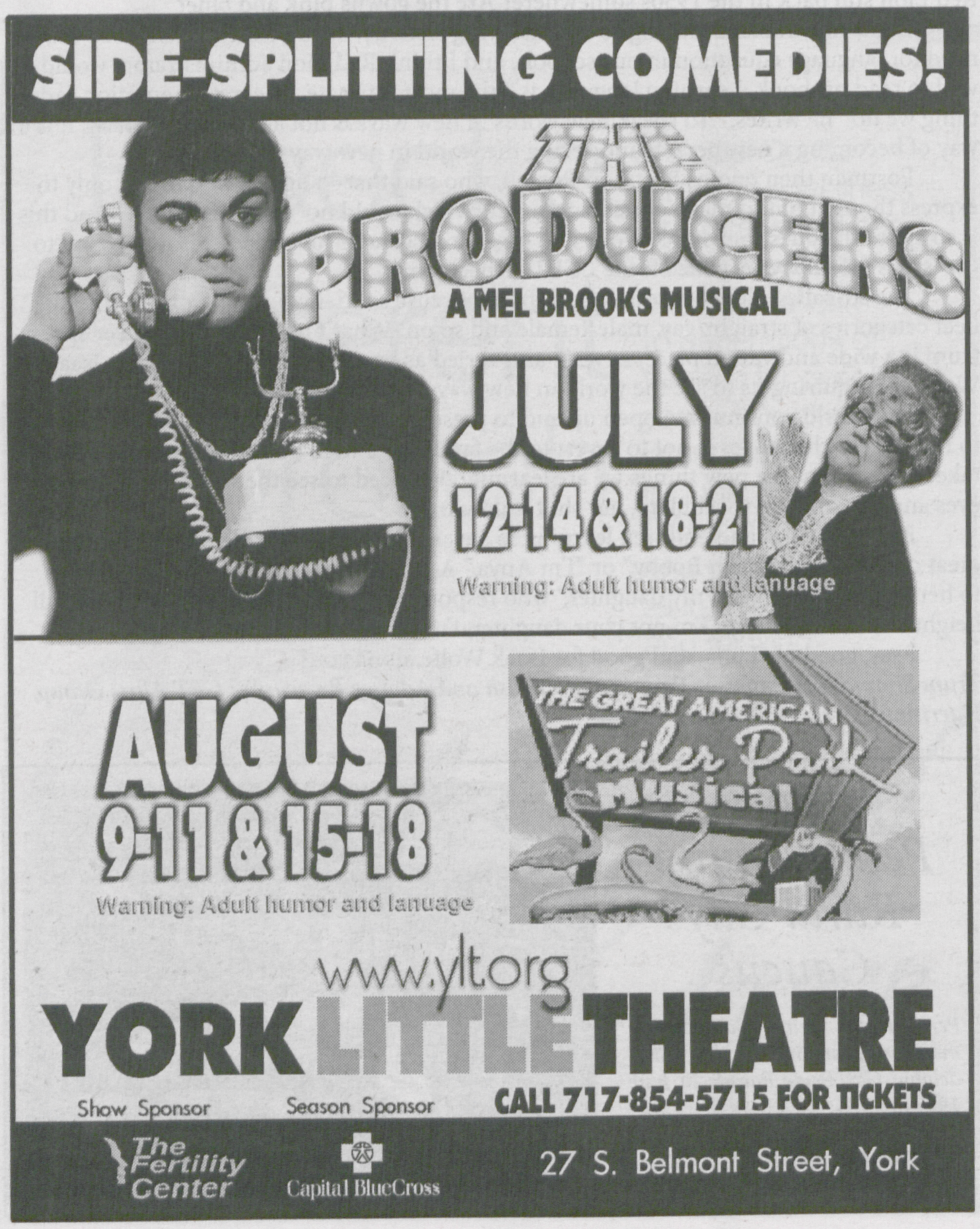
Got that? Being gay is not "normal" and being Christian and gay are incompatible. You must reject one in order to be the other. Mind you, plenty of gay Christians would disagree, but hey, they can get their own app. (Note: I just checked. They have one, actually).

Under "Helpful Tips" there's this unintentionally ironic statement: "Be transparent and honest. Since you are likely someone who is quite used to hiding your sin from others, we would encourage you to walk in the light and speak forthrightly about what is happening in your life and in your heart. This will help you to receive the most benefit from these lessons."

Note that SCF is not advocating that you be honest in real life. They're calling you a sinner and telling you to "confess."

They continue, "However, by encouraging you to walk in the light we are not saying that you are to be graphic or overly detailed in your responses. Satan has received enough glory and attention."

In other words, they don't want you to gross them out. Because you, gay person, are icky and damaged, says the "Christian" group who is trying to "cure" you out of the goodness of their "hearts."



LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director
LGBT Community Center Coalition of Central PA

LGBT History Project to Join Pride Festivities

The LGBT Center's group Aging with Pride, in partnership with the Pride Festival of Central PA, presents their July program, "Memories of Pride" on Thursday July 25 from 6 to 8 pm with an open house reception at The LGBT Center. Refreshments will be served, and this activity is free and open to all.

LGBT History Project volunteers will be in attendance to conduct brief video interviews of willing participants. Stop by and share your most memorable stories and impressions of the first pride event that you ever attended. Wear or bring your vintage pride t-shirts, buttons, programs, photos and other memorabilia, and swap stories and share trivia, from past pride events. These "mini-interviews" of first pride experiences will also take place at Pride Festival of Central PA on Saturday, July 27 from noon to 6 pm—stop by The LGBT Center's booth and check in with LGBT History Project volunteers and videographers there as well!

You may also sign up for a longer video interview to take place at a later date if you would like to share your life story as part of the project. The LGBT History Project collects and presents the stories of LGBT history in central PA as told by those who lived them, through written accounts, and video interviews. Volunteers are also collecting and presenting the photographs, documents and artifacts that illustrate and support these stories, and will weave these stories and materials together to create a historical timeline and narrative context for LGBT history in central PA.

A primary goal of the project is to locate individuals who have knowledge of the LGBT history of central PA and encourage them to share that history before they are no longer able to do so. This project is ongoing, so if you are wondering if you or a friend has missed the opportunity to record an interview, you haven't! Simply reach out to us at history@centralpalgbtcenter.org or (717) 920-9534. Find us online at centralpalgbtcenter.org/lgbt-history-project or facebook.com/LGBTcentralpa.

In addition to collecting these stories, the project aims to encourage the LGBT community of central PA to learn about its history through presentations, exhibits and on-line virtual archives and exhibits that presents the stories and memories of the past. Knowing this history is important to the LGBT community because the evolution of civil rights is built on the successes of the past. Understanding the history of this struggle for equality helps put in perspective how the movement has developed and matured and provides both a sense of accomplishment and inspiration for future efforts

This pride season, I encourage you to make sure to take part in celebrating our local LGBT history by sharing your story and by learning from those who came before each of us.

The mission of The LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

OUT OF TOWN

by Andrew Collins

Rehoboth Beach Delaware

The unofficial gay and lesbian summer beach resort of the Mid-Atlantic states, charming Rehoboth Beach is situated along a sweeping, sandy stretch of the Delaware shore that's within a three-hour drive of Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Over the past decade, many of the town's guest houses, shops, and restaurants have received stylish makeovers, and this once low-key, largely middle-class town has developed a see-and-be-seen cachet that extends well beyond nearby cities. Prices have risen, too, but Rehoboth largely retains a laid-back, welcoming vibe that makes it a perfect destination for summer fun, and a romantic weekend retreat during the quieter spring and fall shoulder seasons.

The dunes near Poodle Beach, a favorite spot of gay sunbathers in Rehoboth. *Photo by Andrew Collins*

The town began developing a subtle gay following in the '50s, probably owing to the fact that closeted Washington types, unable to risk braving the nightlife of D.C., found this relatively secluded beach region a relatively safe and anonymous place to be themselves, or at least test the waters. Lesbians and gays continued to settle here gradually, and then Glenn Thompson opened a full-scale gay resort, the Renegade, on the western outskirts of town in 1980. Soon after, the Blue Moon restaurant and bar opened downtown. Nowadays, Rehoboth (beach-fun.com for general tourism info; camprehoboth.com for details on the GLBT scene) teems with gay-owned or - oriented businesses, including cafes, restaurants, bars, and about a dozen guest houses. Although the Renegade was razed in 2002 to make way for condos, the Blue Moon is still a first-rate place to dine and socialize.

Although an increasing number of trendy, urbane businesses have opened here in recent years, Rehoboth's beachfront is still lined with a bustling, honky-tonk boardwalk of saltwater taffy parlors, video arcades, and souvenir shops. Many visitors spend afternoons catching rays at the beach. The largely gay male section, known as Poodle Beach, runs from about St. Lawrence to Penn streets, at the southern tip of the Boardwalk. Women sunbathe here to some extent, but more lesbians and a fair share of gay men flock north of downtown to the beach at Cape Henlopen State Park (aka "North Shores" - about a 20-to-30-minute walk or 10-minute drive via Ocean Drive).

You can also access other parts of Cape Henlopen State Park by driving 10 miles north (via Rte. 1 and U.S. 9) to the charming and historic town of Lewes, and accessing the park from Dunes Road. Lewes itself is a lovely Dutch colonial town founded in 1631, with a neatly preserved downtown of tony shops and inviting restaurants overlooking a beautiful, narrow yacht harbor - it makes a great little day trip, by car or bike. Top-notch, gay-popular restaurants in Lewes include The Buttery (butteryrestaurant.com), which occupies a romantic Victorian house with a large veranda, and Café Azafran (cafeazafran.com), a Spanish-inspired tapas bistro open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner - there's a branch in Rehoboth, too.

Shopping and Dining

Another popular daytime diversion is shopping. Rehoboth Avenue, the main drag, has plenty of fun retail as well as a few galleries. A block over, Baltimore Avenue is the hub of the town's gay scene, home to a few boutiques, home-furnishing emporia, and the small but well-stocked Proud Bookstore, which carries GLBT books and gifts. Delaware has no sales tax, and out on Route 1 you'll discover a bounty of outlet shopping centers. Back in town, take a break from browsing to grab a delicious lunch (maybe the best chicken salad sandwich you'll ever taste) at Lori's Café (lorisoyveycafe.com), or enjoy a snack or a latte at the Coffee Mill (coffeemillrehoboth.com), a cheerful coffeehouse.

Rehoboth has an excellent dining scene, and several trendy newcomers seem to open each season. On the high end, the superb Blue Moon (bluemoonrehoboth.com) - site of the gay bar of the same name - turns out high-caliber contemporary American fare, like Maine lobster spaghetti and stout-brined Berkshire pork chops. Down the street, trendy Aqua Grill (aquagrillrehoboth.com) serves eclectic and reasonably priced international fare - Thai-mango-chutney burgers, coconut shrimp, pot stickers - and then morphs into a fantastic gay video and dance bar, with a sprawling patio, as the evening proceeds. Drag brunches and T-dances are part of the fun on weekends. In the same neighborhood, Mixx (mixxrehoboth.com) is another high-energy, stylish restaurant and bar with a strong GLBT following, excellent food (macadamia-crusted local rockfish, seared scallops), and a see-and-be-seen cocktail scene - there's live music some evenings.

Another hip spot where you'll see plenty of family, Espuma (espuma-restaurant.com) serves contemporary Spanish and Mediterranean fare, including great lobster paella. And don't miss the casual Purple Parrot (ppgrill.com), a good bet for burgers and diner fare; it's a lively hangout for drinks and conversation, too, with a popular happy hour each day. Other notables include the Seafood Shack (seafoodshackrehoboth.com), which serves tasty fried-oyster po'boys and tender crab cakes and is known for its live entertainment, which includes piano, female vocalists, and acoustic bands.

Dos Locos (doslocos.com) is a great standby for Mexican food and cocktails. The ornately furnished, Asian-inspired Planet X (planetxcafe.com) scores high marks for its creative cocktails and unusual vegetarian and organic fare, from tofu sate with ginger-peanut sauce to grilled ahi fillet with asparagus, scallion herb salad, and lemon aioli. Dogfish Head Brewing & Eats (dogfish.com) is one of the most esteemed craft breweries in the country - it's a fun place to sample a flight of unusual beers (Chicory Stout, Positive Contact Wit-style beer, Chateau Jiahu - which is brewed with rice from an ancient Chinese recipe), and the kitchen serves tasty modern pub fare, too.

For cocktails and entertainment, most folks drop by the lounges at local restaurants to socialize before or after dinner, with the aforementioned Blue Moon, Mixx, Aqua, and Seafood Shack among the favorites. Early in the evening, a lot of lesbians and gay guys head to the Frogg Pond (thefroggpond.com) tavern for karaoke and conversation, or nearby Rehoboth Ale House (rehobothalehouse.com), which has live music some evenings and drag brunch on Sundays. If you're into the leather-and-Levi's scene, be sure to check out the Double L Bar (doublelbar.net), which has a patio, two pool tables, and a cruise-y vibe.

Accomodations

Rehoboth has no shortage of appealing, atmospheric accommodations. Among the top guest houses, the Lighthouse Inn (lighthouseinn.net) is an attractive 1904 house that's steps from the beach and has light-filled, nautically themed guest rooms with gas fireplaces, refrigerators, and TVs with DVD - the top-floor rooms are especially romantic and roomy, and a separate two-story cottage sleeps up to four. Rehoboth Guest House (rehobothguesthouse.com), which is two blocks from the beach and steps from Baltimore Avenue nightlife and dining, is a vintage three-story inn with clean, basic rooms, a friendly and helpful innkeeper, and some of the best summer rates in town - the simplest rooms, which share a bathroom, start at just $120 midweek in high-season, which is a bargain considering the location and lovely grounds and sun decks.

Other good bets include the spacious, spotless, and contemporary Cabana Gardens B&B (cabanagardens.com), whose rooftop sundeck is one of the best in town; the Silver Lake Guest House (silverlakeguesthouse.com), a large and luxurious property with great views of the lake after which it's named and close proximity to Poodle Beach; and century-old At Melissa's B&B (atmelissas.com), an inviting six-room inn in a leafy residential neighborhood close to the beach and restaurants - it's a nice option for LGBT families, as one room has a king and bunk bed, and another has two queen beds. The Royal Rose Inn (royalroseinn.com) is right in the heart of Baltimore Avenue's gay scene and has seven charming and attractive rooms, plus a rooftop hot tub and sundeck.

Perhaps no property in town draws more praise for its colorful personality (and high camp factor) than the lesbian-owned Bewitched and Bedazzled B&B (bewitchedbnb.com), a decadent 13-room property that consists of two neighboring houses. One is playfully furnished as a tribute to the '60s TV classic Bewitched, and the other pays tribute

continued on page 32

Out of Town

continued from page 32

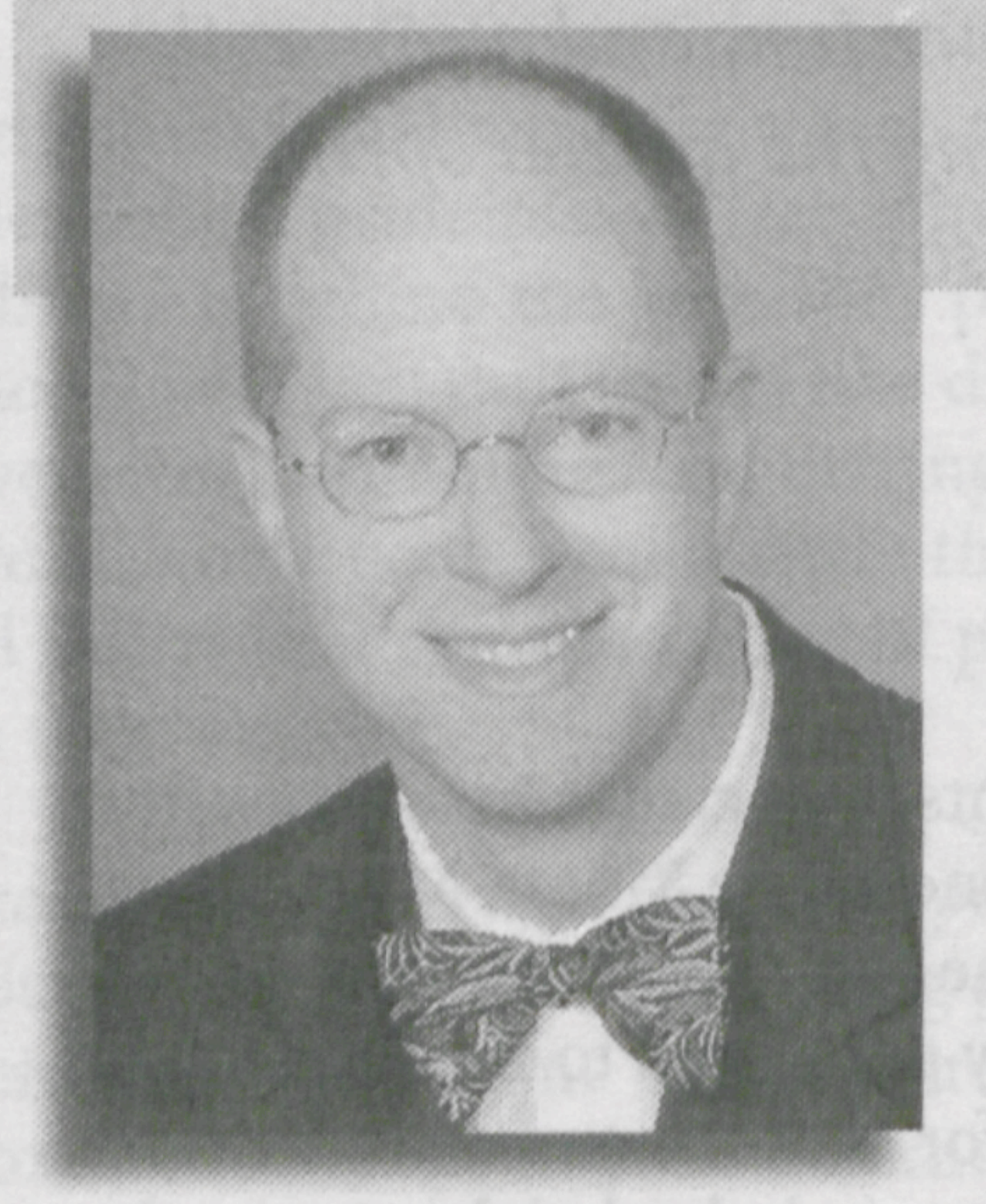
to the glamour of Hollywood, with dozens of autographed photos of movie stars. Another romantic option, the Canalside Inn (canalside-inn-rehoboth.com) overlooks the historic Lewes-Rehoboth Canal and offers 12 elegantly outfitted rooms done in cheerful, pastel hues. It's a 20-minute walk from the beach, as is the spacious, well-kept Shore Inn (shoreinn.com), a mostly male 14-room resort popular for its festive pool, deck, and hot tub. Guys on the make should try the clothing-optional Ram's Head (theramshead.com), which is a 15-minute drive from the beach and caters largely to butch leather-and-Levi's types.

If you're partial to larger, more anonymous mainstream properties, Rehoboth has several chain hotels, including Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Comfort Inn out on Route 1. But to fully experience the bustle and charm of this increasingly hip and trendy gay getaway, try to book a room in town and spend as much time as possible wandering the boardwalk, beach, and quiet residential streets, places where the authentic Rehoboth springs vibrantly to life.

Andrew Collins is the editor in chief of the GLBT travel magazines OutAloha and OutCity, and he covers gay travel for the website GayTravel. About.com. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutofTown@qsyndicate.com.

legal column

By Leo L. Dunn, Attorney at Law



Creating a Legal Relationship: Cohabitation Agreements

As we celebrate Pride, we need to remember that while we have come a tremendous way legally and socially in being treated equally, we still need to do more to protect our same-sex partners should the need arise to go to court.

Same-sex couples in Pennsylvania are in a quandary from a legal perspective. Two unrelated people living together without the benefit of marriage are legal strangers in the view of the court. If a couple has been together 10 years, one owning a house, each having a separate bank account, and then decide to part, or one becomes incapacitated without giving the other power of attorney, the one not on the deed will be viewed as a renter without any right to recover any of the equity he or she may have contributed.

In Pennsylvania, a couple cannot have a legally recognized household without creating a contract. Opposite-sex couples do this by simply entering a marriage contract. All of our other laws then recognize the marriage and ownership status and related rights automatically shift. Same-sex couples do not have this easy method. They need to create the legal relationship at each level. Couples just getting together that do not have many possessions should do this by entering into a cohabitation agreement (cohab).

A cohab outlines what each member brings into the relationship, how each is expected to contribute to the relationship financially and otherwise, and how the household is to be divided if they decide to separate at a later time. By having a contract, each person can document that their contribution, that certain items are their sole possession, and – depending on circumstance – that they have a right to equity built up in the other's name.

Sounds like a gay prenuptial agreement, right? It is in a sense, but it's more. It establishes a baseline in case one partner, who owns the house, gets incapacitated and their family steps in to evict the other partner. In such a case, the agreement can protect the partner by giving them a right to household use, a right to remove their possessions without lawsuit, and shows it was not simply a landlord/tenant relationship. Cohabs can also be used to prove relationship and duration for partner health insurance and other benefits that an employer may provide to domestic partners.

A cohab is the first legal document that couples should put in place before they move in together. It serves as the foundation for establishing their legal relationship. As their relationship matures, they should then add health care directives, financial powers of attorney, deeds stating joint ownership with right of survivorship, and wills.

Our society is slowly evolving toward same-sex marriage parity – but we are not there yet!

Couples, especially young couples, should take the first step in creating a solid legal foundation for their relationship by signing a cohab.

Leo Dunn is an attorney and counselor-at-law practicing in the central Pennsylvania area with a focus on the estate planning needs of the GLBT community. He may be reached at leo@leodunnlaw.com, leodunnlaw@gmail.com, or 717-503-1207.

book review

By Deborah Battisti & Lori Lane
Dauphin County Library System
www.dcls.org

THE | DAUPHIN COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
LIBRARY
OPEN FOR DISCOVERY

Dauphin County Library Offers Summer Reading Club, Prizes!

The column is penned by Deborah Battisti and Lori Lane, Dauphin County Library System, who review new and old titles in book, audiobook, and downloadable formats.

Dig Into Reading runs through August 31 as part of Summer Reading Club 2013 at the Dauphin County Library. Go beyond the new bestseller shelf, past the top award winners, and really dig into the heart of an interesting topic. When was the last time you checked out a nonfiction book? Or watched a documentary? Or listened to a classic CD? Explore an area of the library collection that you haven't looked at before.

Prizes include a drawing for a Kindle Fire. More details about this year's Club are available at dcls.org.

Band Fags by Frank Anthony Polito

"Ever since I first heard that Lionel Richie and Diana Ross song, 'Endless Love, ' all I've wanted is to find The One. Someone to love. Who will love me back." September, 1982. John Cougar's "Jack and Diane" is on endless radio rotation, and Dallas and Dynasty rule the ratings. Jack Paterno is a straight-A student living in the Detroit suburb of Hazel Park, with his own Atari 5200, a Beta VCR, and everything a seventh-grader could ask for. The only thing he has in common with foul-mouthed Brad Dayton, who lives on the gritty south side near 8 Mile, is that both are in Varsity Band. Or maybe that's not the only thing. Because Jack is discovering that while hanging around with girls in elementary school was perfectly acceptable, having lots of girl friends (as opposed to girlfriends) now is getting him and Brad labeled as Band Fags. And Jack is no fag. Is he?

BAND FAGS!
A NOVEL
Frank Anthony Polito

Tell the Wolves I'm Home by Carol Rifka Brunt

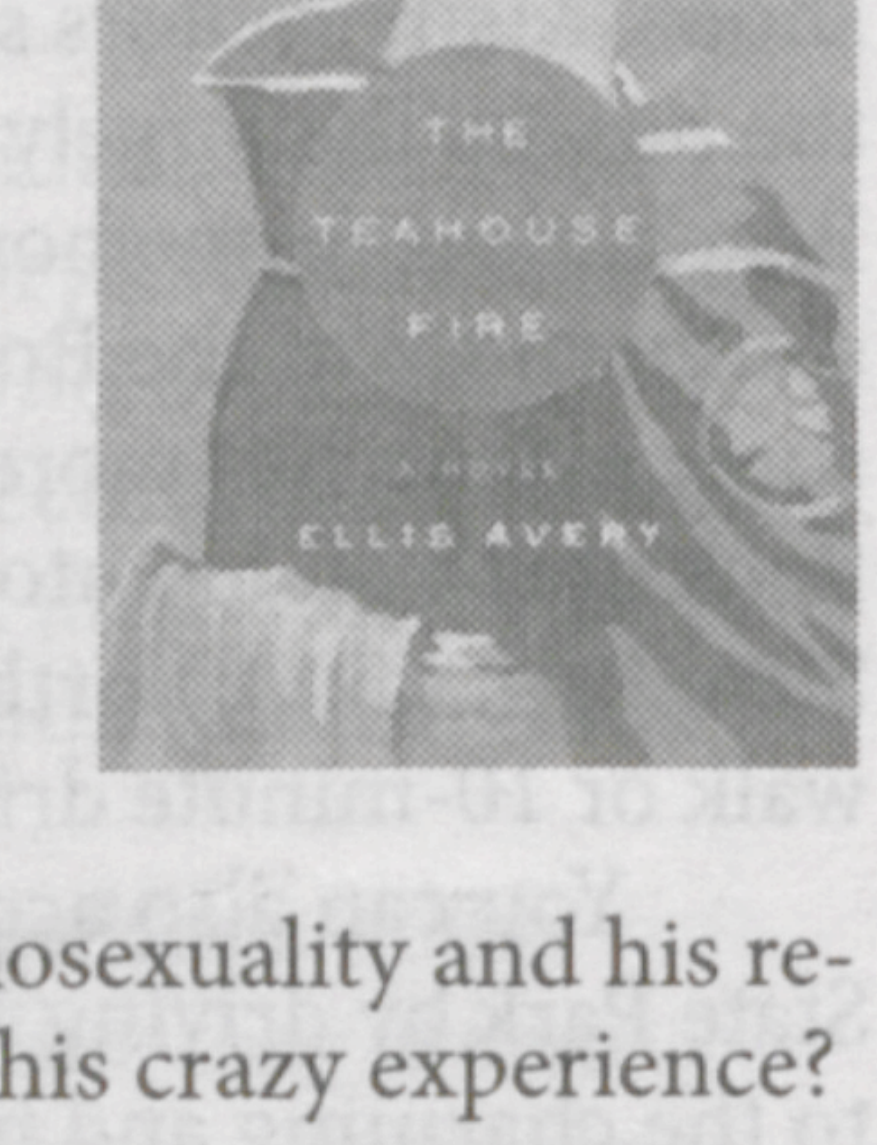
This was named as one of the best books of 2012 by The Wall Street Journal, O: The Oprah Magazine, BookPage, Kirkus Reviews, Booklist, and School Library Journal. But please, don't let the hype scare you away. I'm not one to pick books off of the "best book" type lists – in fact I generally stay away from those. I don't like to follow the pack and read the dumbed-down popular drivel that is often consumed by the masses. Good then that I didn't know about all the accolades when I picked up Carol Rifka Brunt's debut novel.

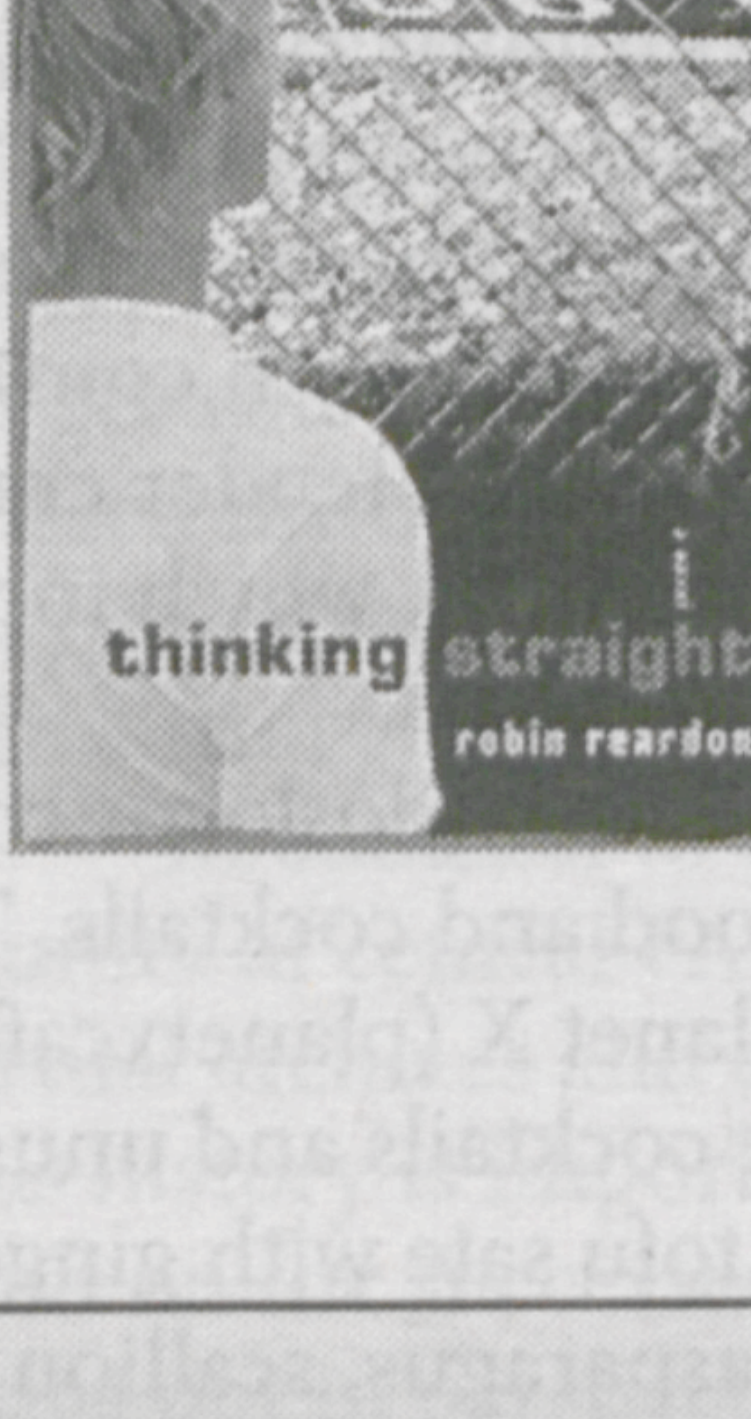
TELL THE
WOLVES
I'M HOME
CAROL RIFKA BRUNT
A NOVEL

In 1987, June Elbus is 14 years old. The only person who has ever truly understood June and perhaps the only person that June has truly ever loved is her uncle, the renowned painter Finn Weiss. When Finn dies of a mysterious illness that her family can't bring themselves to discuss, June's world is turned upside down.

The Teahouse Fire by Avery Ellis

Set in 19th century Japan during a period of upheaval and change in the old ways, young Aurelia, an American taken in by the family of a Japanese tea master, struggles with language, culture and her growing attraction to Yukako, the tea master's strong-willed daughter.





Thinking Straight by Robin Reardon

Taylor Adams is sent to the Christian camp, "Straight to God" where his parents hope he will be "deprogrammed" and come home straight. But Taylor is comfortable with his homosexuality and his relationship with God, so how does he deal with this crazy experience?

> *"All over the country, they're reading about me, and the story doesn't center on me being gay. It's just about a gay person who is doing his job."*
>
> **Harvey Milk**

Is a Single Payer Health Care System the Answer?

By Dr. Bill Davidson,
HealthCare4AllPa

A single payer healthcare system avoids the pitfalls inherent in a for-profit system by starting with a different premise. A Single Payer system acknowledges that all citizens deserve quality healthcare. Everyone is in; no one is left out.

If our government had passed Single Payer legislation in 2010 all Americans would now have access to affordable, quality healthcare.

Unfortunately, that did not happen. Instead the Affordable Care Act (ACA), better known as Obamacare, became the law of the land and so Americans will continue to experience the most inhumane, bureaucratic and expensive healthcare system in the industrialized world. This should not be surprising as Obamacare is more about preserving and enhancing the private health insurance industry than it is about improving the health of all Americans.

When Barack Obama came into office in 2008 there were 50 million uninsured Americans, a million medical bankruptcies, and we trailed the rest of the industrialized world in life expectancy and infant mortality. These were certainly good reasons to initiate reform but it is doubtful that any reform would have gotten off the ground had the private health insurance industry not been going out of business.

After more than a decade of double digit increases in premium costs, employers and employees could no longer afford the products the insurers were selling. By mandating that everyone be insured and supplementing the purchase of insurance premiums with government money (taxes), Obama and the Democrats rescued the dying private health insurance industry.

Defenders of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) see advantages that go beyond those benefitting the insurance industry. They believe that Obamacare will improve access to healthcare by reducing the number of uninsured as well as increasing the number of indigent citizens who are eligible for Medicaid. They feel that quality should improve through the creation of "medical homes", "pay for performance", and other strategies written into the legislation. Costs are expected to come under control by reducing provider reimbursements as well as making consumers of healthcare more price sensitive with higher deductibles and copays. Regrettably, these positive outcomes will never come about because the ACA fails to address the most wasteful aspect of the American healthcare system.

The ACA will fail because it perpetuates and expands a bureaucracy that already siphons off 1 out of every 3 healthcare dollars for administration. Urged on by their Wall Street investors, this massive administrative burden is created by the private health insurance industry's pursuit of profits. As in the past, when profits become threatened, access and quality will be sacrificed to maintain the corporate bottom line.

A single payer healthcare system avoids the pitfalls inherent in a for-profit system by starting with a different premise. A Single Payer system acknowledges that all citizens deserve quality healthcare. Everyone is in; no one is left out. Ideally, all necessary care is provided including dental, pharmaceutical, emergency, etc. A panel of medical experts and citizens would determine what services would be reimbursed and how much the providers would be paid. These determinations would be open and transparent not hidden from public scrutiny in corporate boardrooms where most decisions are now made.

The hallmark of a Single Payer system is that there is only one insurance company. It is a public entity which collects taxes and compensates providers (hospitals, doctors, etc.). Taxes can be levied in a variety of ways. One strategy would be to keep the present revenue streams provided by Medicare and Medicaid. Then, add a 10% payroll tax on the employer and a 3% income tax on the employee. Most employers who presently provide healthcare coverage for their employees would find that 10% is less than they are currently paying. Since all employers would participate, the playing field in America would be level. Competing overseas would be easier as well because companies from Single Payer countries would no longer have an economic advantage over businesses from the U.S. Freed from yearly, onerous health insurance negotiations, businesses could concentrate on what they do best.

With healthcare guaranteed, employees need not feel stuck in an unfulfilling job for fear that they'll lose their health coverage if they leave. Older employees "holding on till they reach 65" will now feel free to retire earlier knowing medical bills will not leave them destitute. Bankruptcy for medical reasons, unheard of in Single Payer countries, will no longer plague a million American families each year.

Employers often fear hiring older workers because it might cause higher premiums or even policy cancellations. Under a Single Payer system employers can offer jobs to those with the skills and experience they need. Since providing healthcare coverage for employees is no longer expensive and unpredictable, entrepreneurs can pursue start-up ventures without the uncertainty of health insurance issues.

Single Payer is "win-win" for both labor and management.

Universal coverage must be affordable if it is to be sustained. Fortunately, single payer systems run more efficiently than our present, for-profit system, by a factor of 2 to 1 ($4,000/per capita vs. $8,000/per capita). Most single payer efficiencies come from reducing administrative costs. For instance, the average doctor in America spends $82,000/year relating to the insurance industry. Canadian physicians functioning in a Single Payer system spend about $22,000/year. America's Medicare, largely a single payer system for the elderly, operates with an administrative overhead of less than 5%. Overhead for private insurance companies like United Health or Aetna is about 15%. Further savings can be obtained by group bargaining with the pharmaceutical and medical technology industries. The Veterans Administration, a single payer system, obtains drugs for 40% less than the rest of us. Europeans in single payer systems obtain similar discounts. By issuing certificates of need, Single Payer healthcare systems save millions of dollars by avoiding wasteful re-duplication of services such as when rival hospitals in a small town have competing open heart surgery programs.

Access and cost of course mean nothing if the quality is poor. Single Payer countries such as Canada, Germany, and France are well known to have health care outcomes commensurate with our own. Patients in single payer systems have the freedom to choose their doctor and hospital and are not constrained in a network as so often happens in private insurance systems. Physicians, relieved of hours of negotiations with insurance companies have more time for patient care. As on-going necessary health care is guaranteed, many lawsuits can be eliminated creating a better malpractice environment.

Despite its many virtues America has failed to adopt a universal single payer healthcare system because the private insurance and pharmaceutical industries have coerced our government officials into protecting corporate profits over and above the public good. Extreme right wing propaganda has also played a role in blocking single payer legislation by focusing the electorate on anti-socialism slogans instead of Medicare and VA successes. To acquire a universal Single Payer healthcare system Americans will need to confront the forces of powerful corporations and extremism. The battle will be difficult but acquiring quality, affordable healthcare for all is well worth the fight.

Dr. Bill Davidson is a member of the state single payer advocacy group HealthCare4AllPa.

MCC column

By Rev. Lori Rivera, Pastor
MCC of the Spirit

Rainbow Colors Adorn Sanctuary

Pride season is upon us once again. MCCs celebrated June as "Pride-Tide" in the church calendar.

We put up our pride rainbow colors around the Sanctuary, I wear rainbow stoles with my vestments, and the service revolves around our pride as a people and as LGBTQIA Christians.

Pride: PROUD of who I am. I am proud of who I am as a lesbian and as a Christian. I am proud of the person God has made me to be and has enabled me to mature into. I am proud of the journey I have taken to find my place in my faith, in my relationship, and in my community. My pride comes from that place within me, that voice of the Holy Spirit, that says I am whole and worth all that God has done for me through Jesus the Christ.

pRide: REMEMBERING those who came before me. I remember my LGBTQIA brothers and sisters who came before me even when I don't know their names. I remember those who were at the Stonewall Riots, those who were part of the first pride parades, and those who fought and paid the price so that I can be out of the closet and safe. I remember all who worked through social, political and religious circles to overcome challenges put in our paths. I will remember those who continue the work.

prIde: INTERFAITH acceptance. I am thankful for the work being done in and by our interfaith community. More and more houses of worship are becoming "Open and Affirming" of the LGBTQIA community members. Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses are worship are developing or have developed programs to ensure that not matter one's gender identification all people are accepted in worship and in the religious life of the institution. The Interfaith Alliance of PA and the LGBT - Interfaith Coalition continue to be a voice of support, acceptance, and hope religiously and politically.

priDe: DEMAND my rights. I demand my rights as a citizen of this country. I demand the right to marry the person of my choice. I demand the right to make full medical decisions for my loved one. I demand the right to all the legal safe guards every heterosexual couple obtain as soon as their marriage license is filed. I demand to be more than tolerated. Tolerance isn't enough. I demand to be fully accepted as the person I am whether anyone likes it or not. I demand to be fully accepted as a lesbian, as the committed partner in a relationship for 28 years, and accepted as one with full legal rights and protection in my community. One day I will have all these rights.

pridE: EVERYDAY is pride day. While we celebrate Pride month in June and have our Pride Festival in Harrisburg in July. Everyday should be "pride" day. Be proud of who you are. Be proud of where you have come from and the challenges you have overcome in your life. Be proud of the journey you have walked. Be proud of those who have walked with you and be proud of those you have carried and those who have carried you in times of challenges. **Be PROUD!**

Have PRIDE!

Michael Lucas Film Explores Gay-friendly Israel

By Central Voice

"When it comes to learning about Israel, go to good sources," Michael Lucas tells Central Voice.

Lucas' documentary Undressing Israel (46 mins.) screens July 14 at the Philadelphia QFest. The adult-film icon examines a side of the Holy Land he feels is too often overlooked: its thriving gay community.

Lucas' promo materials say: When many people think of Israel, it is often in terms of modern war or ancient religion. But there is much more to the Jewish state than missiles and prayers. The country is the size of New Jersey and has 6 million citizens.

The film features interviews with a diverse range of local men.

One interview involves a gay member of Israel's parliament. For the last six years, the Knesset has invited lgbt leaders to its floor for a reception during the country's month-long celebration of gay life every June.

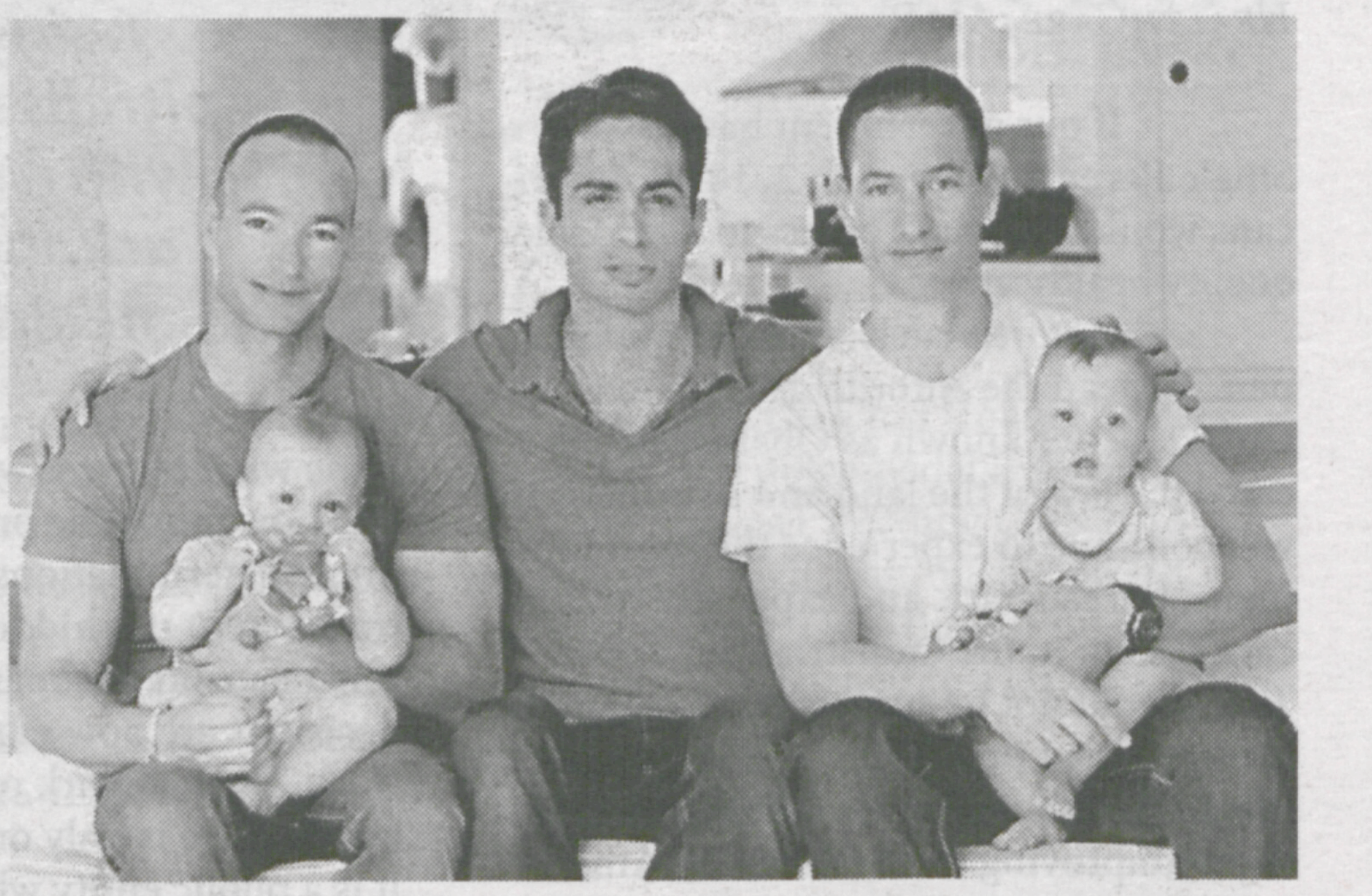
The Jerusalem Post reports that about 20,000 travel to Tel Aviv for June Pride events. Lucas describes Tel Aviv as Israel's premiere gay destination. "I've never met a gay man or lesbian who traveled top Tel Aviv that didn't want to go back," Lucas said. Events include beach parties, exhibitions, parades, festivals, music and dance shows, and lectures.

A trainer who served openly in the Israel Defense Forces also tells his story. LGBT individuals have been able to serve openly in the armed forces since 1993.

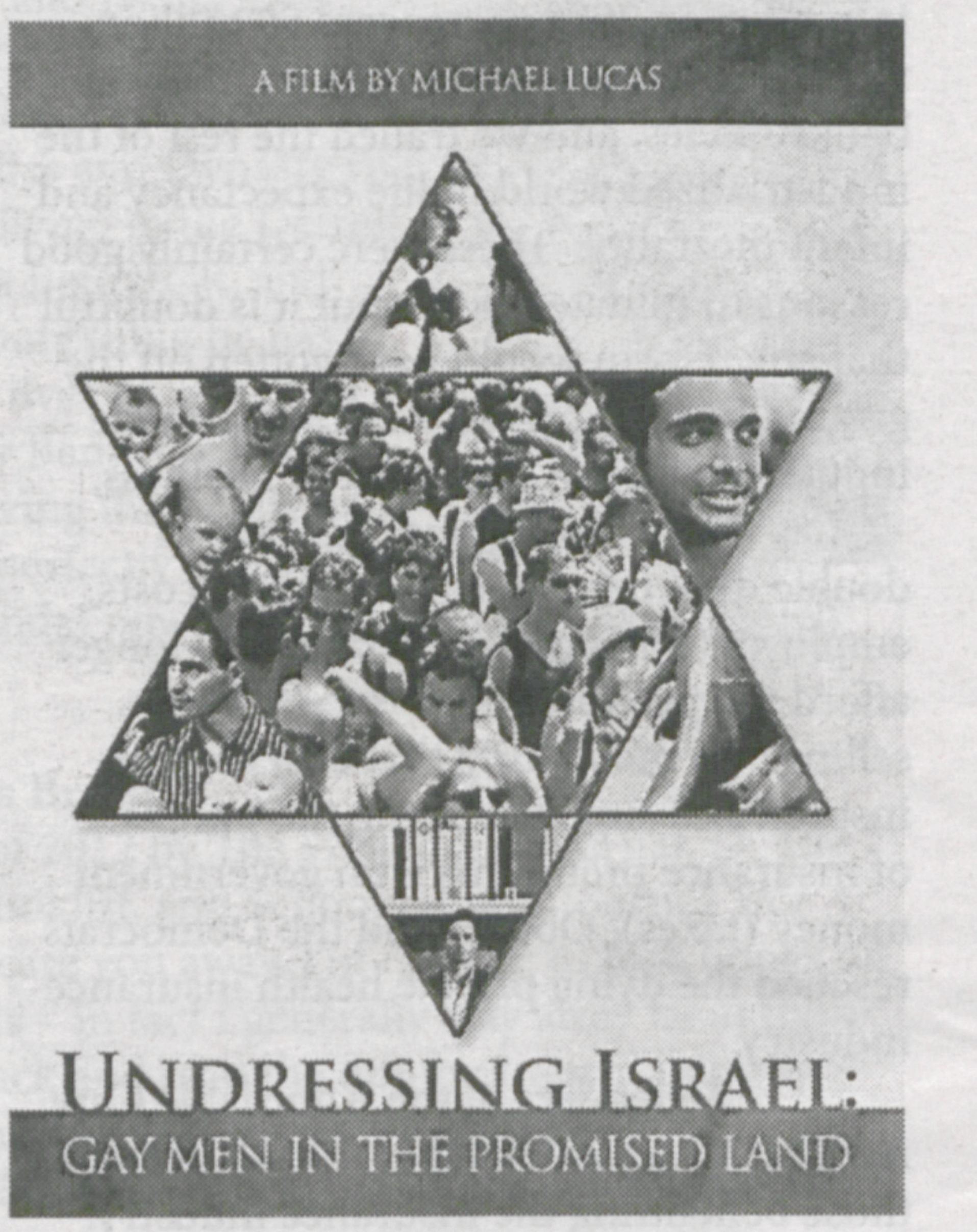
A young Israeli-Arab journalist shares his experiences. "His mother is Jewish and divorced from his Arab father. He is able to speak openly but not all journalists can whether Israeli-Arab or Arab-Israeli," Lucas explains. "Although I know many Arab-Israeli journalists, being gay is still taboo is Arab culture."

Lucas also talked with a pair of fathers raising their kids.

Lucas says although there's lots of information out there on Israel, most of it concerns military and Middle Eastern issues. "I've been going to Israel once or twice year since 2004. There are so many positive aspects to the country, its culture, its treatment of lgbt people," he says.



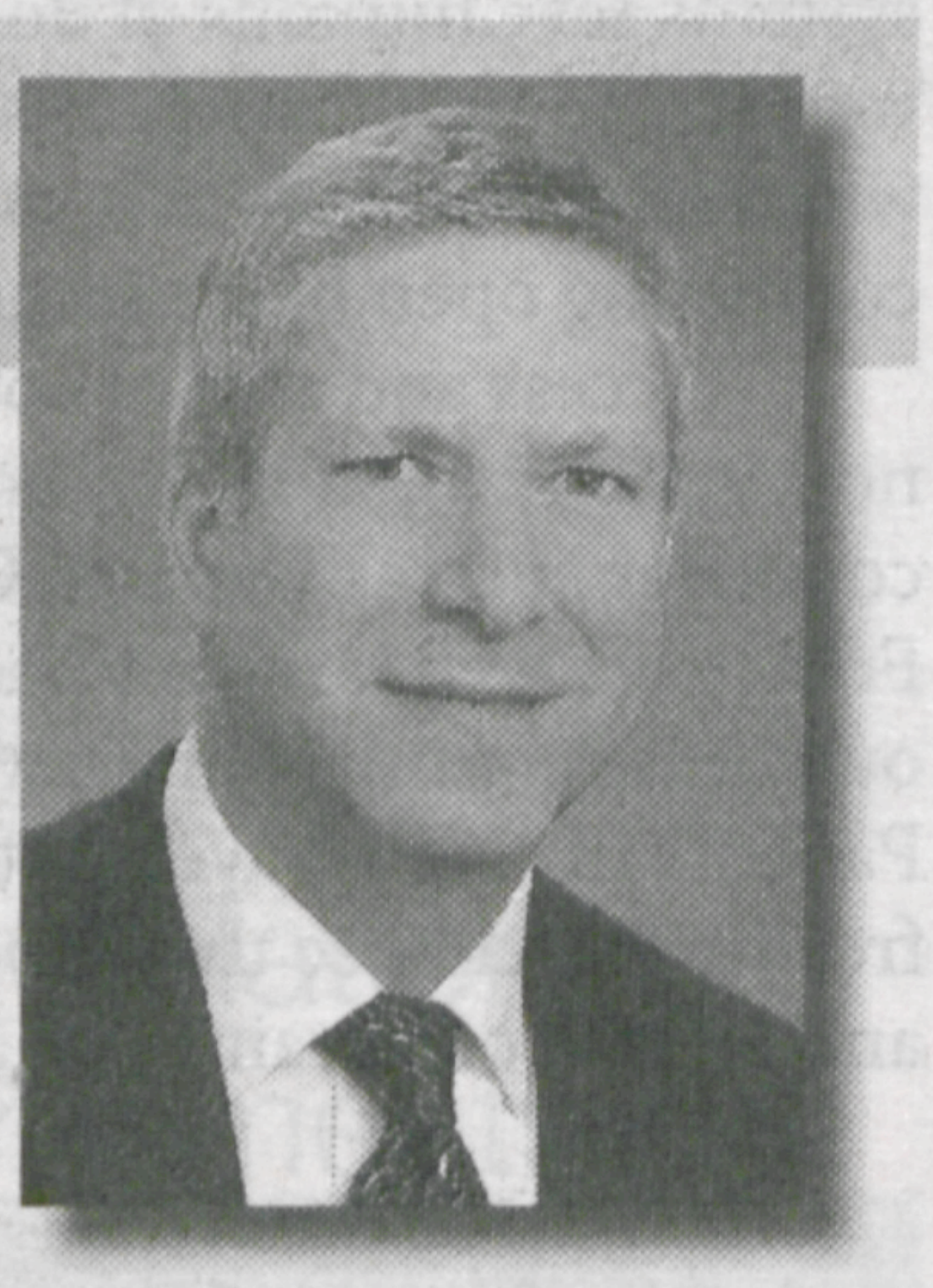
Lucas talked with a pair of fathers raising their kids.


A FILM BY MICHAEL LUCAS
UNDRESSING ISRAEL:
GAY MEN IN THE PROMISED LAND

Chamber on the move

By Bill Krenz, Vice President

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA
GAY AND LESBIAN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Why Should Individuals Join Chamber?

Have you ever considered joining the chamber, but then second-guessed yourself before you signed up?

Isn't the chamber for business owners, you wonder? It's not for individuals.

Have you thought that since you are an individual performer for some company or business, that it really is more important for your manager or owner to be a chamber member than yourself?

Consider this: You, as an individual (and possibly with your boyfriend, girlfriend, partner or spouse) run your household.

Whether you rent or own, you are spending your hard earned money to keep it going and hopefully, you have a little extra to improve it.

Being a chamber member can help guide you in the right direction for the products you need, a professional service or, even a car.

As a chamber member, you have access to various discounts from local businesses.

You can use the chamber's list of member businesses. You get to personally meet LGBTA entrepreneurs in the area who would be happy to give you a customized service or product.

And why not spend your money with an LGBTA allied business, who will respect you when you shop with the love of your life.

Research activities are much simpler when you are a chamber member.

Consider joining the chamber and reap the benefits that a chamber member brings.

And if you decide not to join the chamber, at least volunteer for another LGBTA organization.

There are plenty of opportunities showcased in advertising throughout the pages of Central Voice.

Upcoming Events

The July mixer event will be held at St@rtUp on Thursday, July 25, at 1519 North Third Street, Harrisburg, PA. This is Harrisburg's first co-working space. Adam Brackbill and Adam Porter are hosts. This mixer kicks off the Pride of Central Events in Harrisburg that weekend, where you will see the chamber volunteers in the new chamber t-shirts sponsored by PNC and other local businesses. The chamber is an active participant in all the scheduled Pride events July 25-28.

Past Events

May 16, the 'Foot in Mouth' mixer took place at the LGBT Center of Central PA, Harrisburg, hosted by Ernest Fontaine DDS & Michael Simonetti, and Peter S. Holtz DPM & Chris Gatesman. Guests learned their specialties with the dental practice and with podiatry.

The chamber supported the Ladies Who Lead, Inside and Out event May 31 at the Crowne Plaza Harrisburg/Hershey.

The chamber hosted a booth at Lancaster Pride June 15, and sported the first-ever Chamber T-shirts. PNC is Anchor Sponsor for the chamber's T-shirt project.

June 19, a mixer was held at Posh Studios, with the very talented photographer Dennis Martin hosting the event. Guests were able view Martin's photography and a slide show. Martin has become a premier photographer of the LGBTA community here in the region.

Please check the chamber's website for registration information, upcoming events and business members and supporters. Use your money to bolster the lgbta community and allies. Info: www.cpglcc.org

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Silent Witness Becomes Center Program

The LGBT Center of Central PA announced that the Silent Witness Peacekeepers Alliance (SWPA) is now a program of the center. Silent Witness had been a project of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC) for the past several years.

"Becoming part of The LGBT Center is a perfect match for us," said Alanna Berger, executive director of Silent Witness Peacekeepers Alliance. "We believe that being part of The LGBT Center will help us continue to provide our services as we spread the word of non-violent response to spiritual violence."

The partnership marks the latest formal relationship between The LGBT Center and other local organizations serving the LGBT community.

In 2009, The LGBT Center merged with Common Roads, a previously standalone organization which continues to provide education, programming, and advocacy to empower LGBTQ youth in central PA.

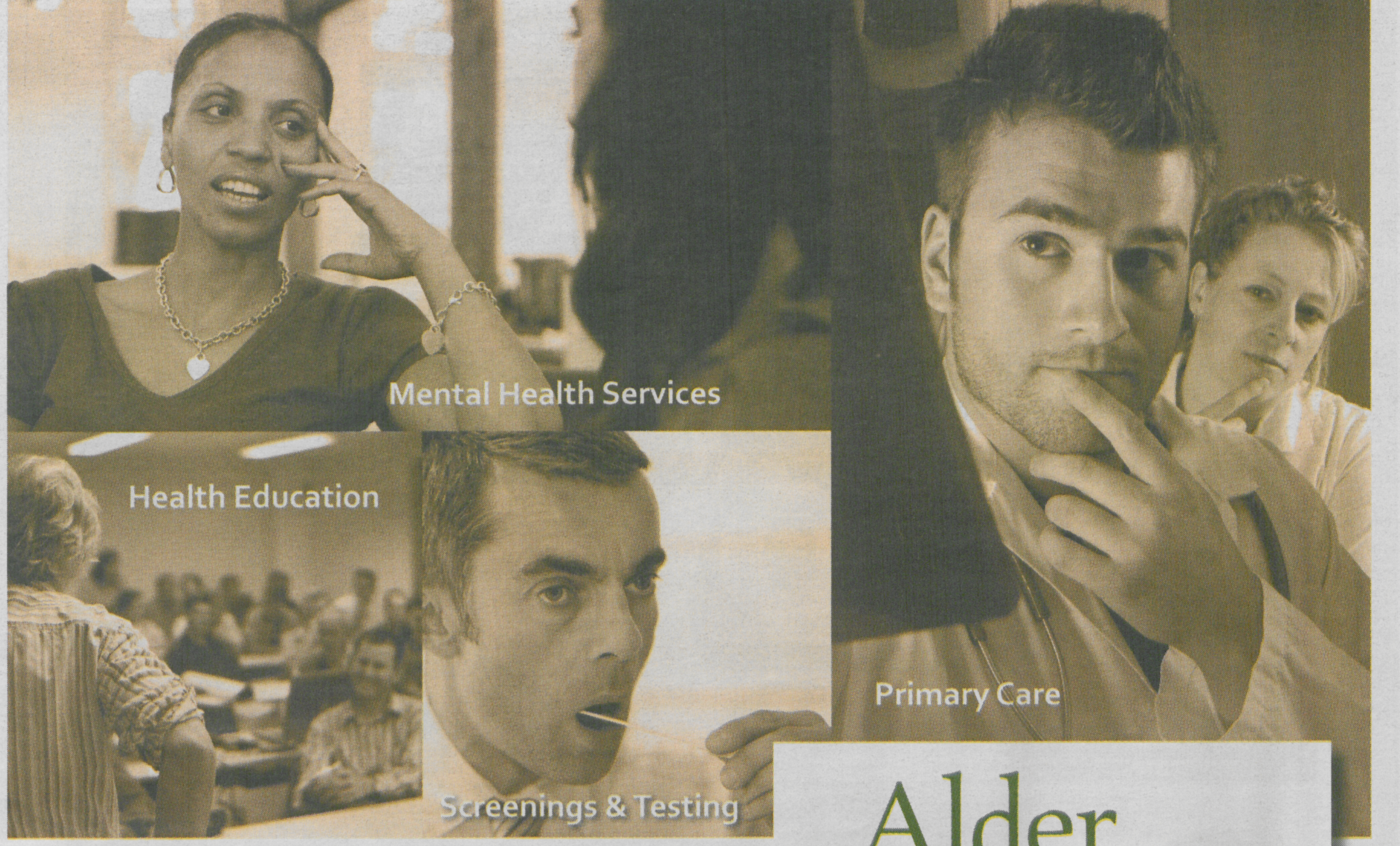
In 2010, The LGBT Center became the fiscal agent of Lancaster Pride, which celebrates the diversity of the LGBTQ community in Lancaster County through an annual Pride Festival and related activities.

"I am thrilled to have Silent Witness Peacekeepers Alliance on board with their savvy volunteers, their iconic rainbow umbrellas, and their deep commitment to creating safe spaces," said center executive director Louie Marven. "This is a logical and exciting way to expand the work of the center."

Silent Witness Peacekeepers Alliance will continue to provide a non-confrontational buffer between the LGBT community and those who would protest LGBT events. Silent Witnesses are peacekeepers, not counter-protesters, and receive significant training in non-confrontation techniques specially designed for the type of work they do.

The LGBT Center of Central PA creates common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

Info: Louie Marven, 717-920-9534; lmarvenAcentralpalgbtcenter.org



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